



Greater Northwest Community Coalition



April 2005

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What Is SNAP?

In 2002 Mayor Martin O'Malley launched the Strategic Neighborhood Action Plan (SNAP) program to create comprehensive plans for select clusters of neighborhoods throughout the city. Following his administration's philosophy of putting Neighborhoods First and building on established strengths, SNAP establishes four central planning guidelines:

Partnership: Residents work with their neighbors across traditional boundaries, as well as with City agencies and other stakeholders (including nonprofits, churches, institutions, and businesses). During an era of limited resources, a broad stakeholder group has greater capacity to both create and implement the plan.

Priorities: Plans identify key assets in each cluster and build upon these strengths within a framework of market demand. Cluster priorities target implementable agency actions and services for maximum impact.

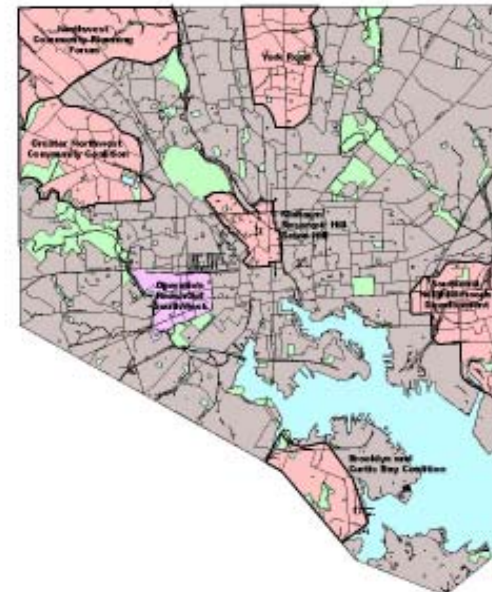
Participation: The planning process is inclusive. Residents and other stakeholders have opportunities for decision-making and for carrying out improvement projects with the City's support.

Perspective: No one issue is the key to a successful plan. Neighborhood revitalization must be comprehensive, addressing many issues and priorities and establishing a long-term framework for future development and change.

In September 2002, the Planning Commission adopted the pilot plan for the SNAP program, the Operation ReachOut Southwest (OROSW) SNAP for a cluster of neighborhoods in Southwest Baltimore.

Following the program's launch, fifteen clusters citywide applied for SNAP designation. In January 2003, six clusters were selected citywide:

- Brooklyn and Curtis Bay
- Midtown/Reservoir Hill/Seton Hill (Midtown)
- Northwest Community Planning Forum (NWCPF)
- Greater Northwest Community Coalition (GNCC)
- Southeastern Neighborhoods Development (SEND)
- York Road Partnership



Neighborhood Profile

Planning Process

In 2000, the Greater Northwest Community Coalition began its Comprehensive Community Planning Initiative. The primary objective was to improve the quality of life for the 35,000 residents of the nineteen neighborhoods within its boundaries.

The volunteer group conducted the initiative using a committee structure to obtain recommendations from residents, community stakeholders, and municipal agencies. To maximize resident input three community-wide forums were held at various phases of the initiative: February 10, 2001, September 26, 2001, and April 13, 2002.

From February 2002 through July 2002, GNCC conducted a community wide Physical Conditions Survey, which came to be known as the "Palm Pilot Survey." In addition, GNCC hired a planner to conduct a market study, analyze the data that were collected, and develop recommendations.

The information gathered during the initiative became the basis of the SNAP application submitted in November 2002. In January 2003, Mayor O'Malley announced that the GNCC had been awarded one of six SNAP designations.

Between March 2003 and December 2003, the GNCC Committees - Housing, Commercial Revitalization, Open Space, Public Safety, and Education - held 30 meetings with residents, community stakeholders, and city agencies to develop the SNAP document.

In January 2004 at the SNAP WRAP and Volunteer Recognition Brunch, the GNCC SNAP document was presented to the community and action items were prioritized by participants.

Since January 2004, the GNCC has begun implementing the plan.

This plan is dedicated to all the residents of the Greater Northwest Community Coalition who gave of their time, talent, and effort to produce this plan; a special thank you to members and chairs of the subcommittees, and Mr. Joseph Henley, Sr. and Mr. Ronald Owens, early advocates for the GNCC Comprehensive Planning Initiative, for their vision, encouragement, and "can do" spirit.

Description of Neighborhood

GNCC is bounded by Northern Parkway to the northwest, Wabash Avenue to the northeast, Dukeland Street to the east, Gwynns Falls Parkway to the south, and Baltimore County to the west. The CSX railroad tracks, Hanlon Park, and Powder Mill Park serve as natural boundaries.

Liberty Heights Avenue and Garrison Boulevard are the central spines of the neighborhood. Both streets change names at the boundaries of the cluster. At the entrance to Baltimore County, Liberty Heights Avenue becomes Liberty Road and shifts to a commercial thoroughfare. At the entrance to the Park Heights neighborhood, Garrison Boulevard becomes Garrison Avenue. In addition to two major corridors, the cluster has two major transit stations: West Coldspring Metro Station and Rogers Avenue Metro Station.

Approximately 35,000 people live in the cluster, which is made up of approximately 20 distinct neighborhoods. The area is surrounded by several major institutions and employers, such as Baltimore City Community College and Kernan Hospital, but the cluster itself is generally a bedroom community. Although located in Baltimore City, and featuring many urban amenities, such as transit and proximity to downtown, the area has many typically suburban features, including separation of land uses and large detached homes.



History

Seventy percent of Greater Forest Park was developed between 1908 and 1950. Not coincidentally, 1908 is the year the Ford Motor Company began to market the Model T as an affordable means of transportation. In other words, GNCC was developed as a suburban, car-oriented neighborhood. However, unlike today's suburbs, which are developed with the premise that households have multiple cars and multiple drivers, GNCC was developed with urban amenities because it was assumed that each household only had one car. Transit, open space, and shopping were located in walking distance to most homes.

The area was originally occupied by professionals. As apartment buildings were developed, service workers also moved into the neighborhood, creating a mixed income environment very early in the neighborhood's history.

The zoning code and the popularity of living in a green environment led to the widespread development of detached homes with green space on all four sides. Partly as a reaction to the sameness of rowhouses, the area was developed with a wide variety of housing types, ranging from large Victorian homes to modest bungalows.

Assets

Housing/Commercial

Quality and Diversity of Housing Stock
Development Opportunities
Historical Character
Detached Houses
The Oaks at Liberty – senior housing
Pharmacies
Firehouse Redevelopment
Farmers Market

Recreation/Open Space

Hanlon Park
Forest Park Golf Course
Forest Park Senior Center
Library
Gwynns Falls Trail
Windsor Hills Conservation Trail
Leakin Park
Proximity to Druid Hill Park
Liberty Recreation Center
Green Neighborhoods (trees, yards, garden club)
West Arlington Water Tower

Transportation/Location

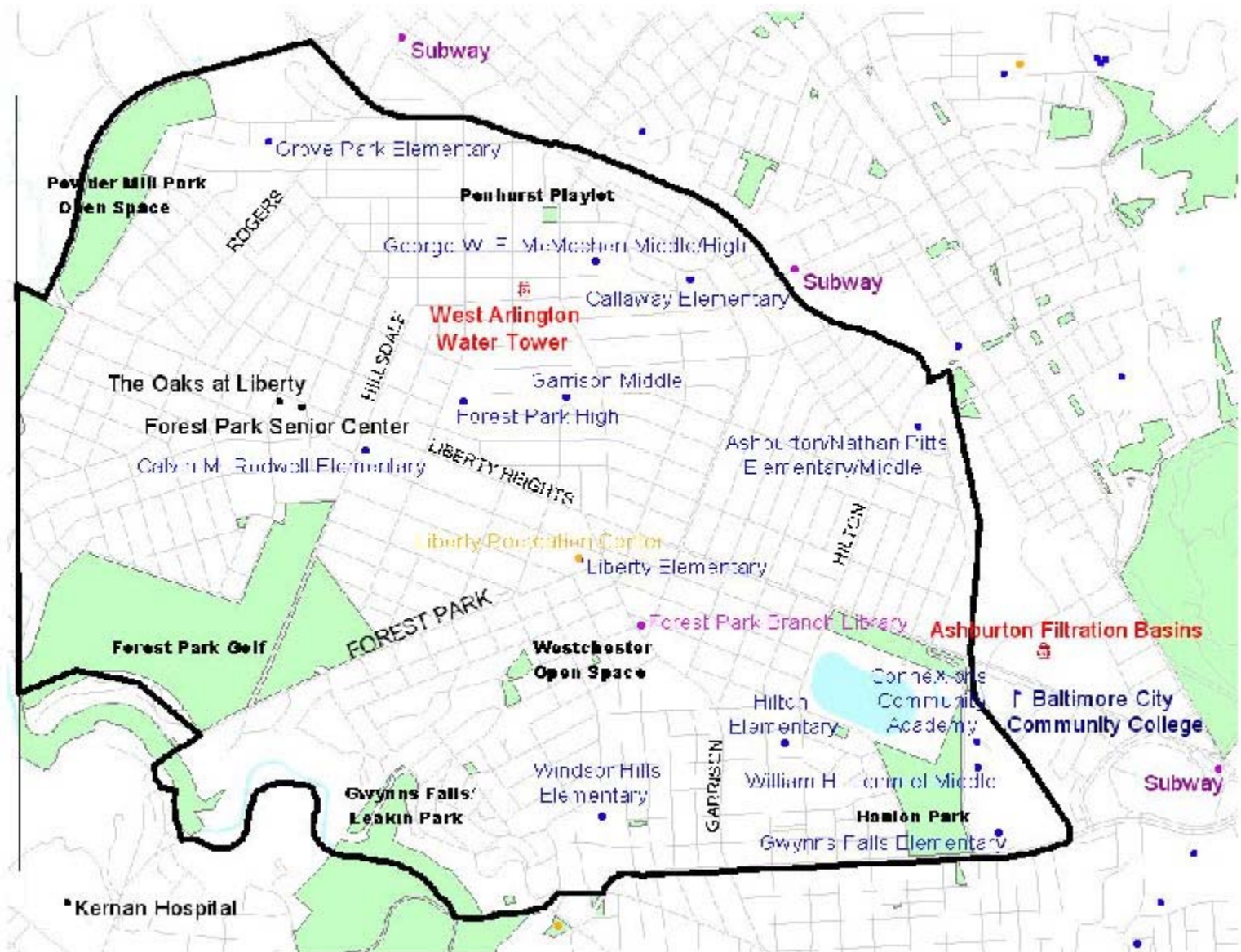
Liberty Heights Corridor (repaved)
Public Transportation (Metro)
Access to Major Roads (I-695, I-70, I-83)
20 minutes to airport
15 minutes to Penn Station
Access to Cultural District

People

Diversity (economic, age, religion, etc.)
Leading Citizens
Vision and talent of residents
Strong Neighborhood Associations
Coalition of 19 neighborhoods

Institutions

Schools
Faith-based Institutions
BRIDGE
University of Maryland Medical Center
Proximity to Kernan Hospital, BCCC, Coppin State College
Ashburton Filtration Center
Encore Theater
Human Services Center
Financial Institutions
Eating Together Programs
Fraternity Headquarters



Asset Map

Overview

HOUSING

The Greater Northwest Community Coalition is generally a bedroom community featuring diverse housing types, ranging from large single family frame houses to modest brick rowhouses. As shown on the land use map, most of the area consists of single family homes, but there are concentrations of multi-family housing. Most of the multi-family housing can be found along the major corridors in garden style apartment buildings or large frame houses that have been converted to multiple units.

COMMERCIAL

There are three main commercial areas: Liberty Heights and Garrison Boulevard, Liberty Heights and Gwynn Oak, and Dolfield and Coldspring. There are also several smaller neighborhood commercial areas along Garrison Boulevard.

While overall improvement of commercial districts is important, the most critical commercial issue is attracting a grocery store. Supermarkets were listed by over 60% of residents as the retail business most desired for the GNCC area.

TRANSPORTATION, STREETSCAPES, GATEWAYS

Liberty Heights Avenue connects the cluster to the rest of Baltimore City to the south/east and to Liberty Road and Baltimore County to the north/west. Garrison Boulevard is the north-south spine of the cluster and links the cluster to other west Baltimore neighborhoods. The cluster has immediate access to I-695, I-70, and I-83.

INDUSTRIAL

The Northwest Corridor Industrial Area is located along the western edge of GNCC, mostly on the other side of the railroad tracks, but some industrial uses do spill across Wabash Avenue and into the cluster area.

The recently completed Baltimore Industrial Report evaluated the Northwest Corridor Industrial Area, focusing on the portion of the corridor on the other side of Wabash Avenue. Although the businesses in GNCC were not formally part of the study, the recommendations would encompass the entire industrial zone.

The study noted that other than the Menlo Industrial Park, the industrial properties in this corridor lack the access, size and infrastructure required to be competitive for industrial use. Surrounded by residential uses, many of the businesses are blighting the residential neighborhoods. The area's industrial parcels are small with obsolescent buildings occupied primarily by auto repair shops. The study concluded that this industrial area should be rezoned to residential or other uses more compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

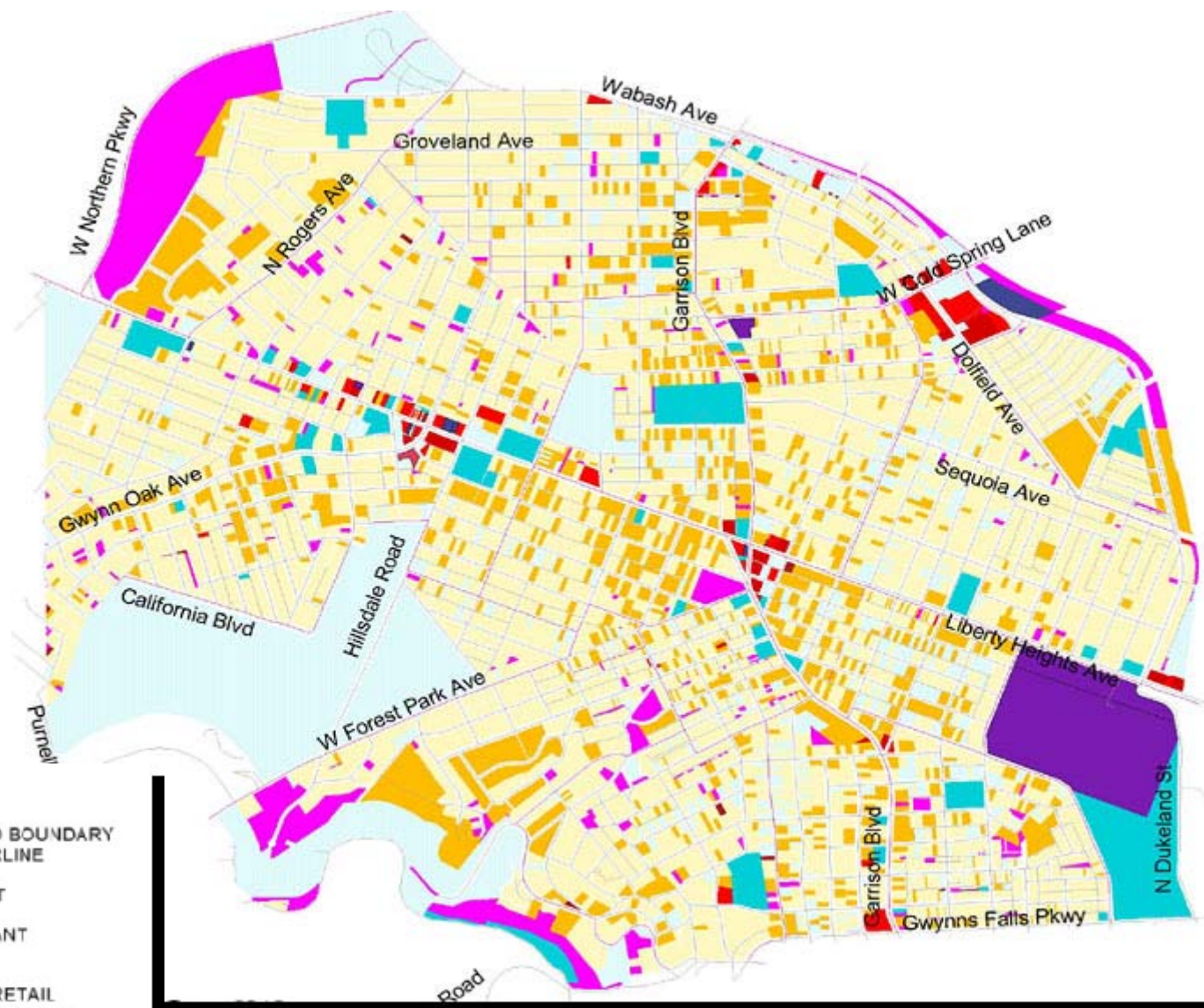
Within the cluster there are three large parks, each of which serve a different function. Hanlon Park is the showcase park, with beautiful views of Lake Ashburton and downtown. Hanlon Park also has facilities for family recreation, such as a picnic pavilion, baseball diamond, and playgrounds. Forest Park Golf Course serves as adult recreation, as well as open space. Powder Mill Park serves as a forested buffer between the neighborhood and Northern Parkway. The cluster is also in close proximity to Baltimore's two largest parks: Druid Hill Park and Gwynns Falls Leakin Park, featuring the Jones Falls Trail and the Gwynns Falls Trail respectively, linking the neighborhoods to downtown.

LAND USE MAP

As the land use map illustrates, GNCC is mostly single family residential, with commercial nodes and multi-family housing along Liberty Heights Avenue and Garrison Boulevard. GNCC is framed by open space and transportation corridors: Hanlon Park on the southeast, Forest Park Golf Course on the southwest, and Powder Mill Park on the northwest; railroad tracks and Wabash Avenue on the northeast, Gwynns Falls Parkway on the south.

LEGEND

-  NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARY
-  STREET CENTERLINE
-  VACANT
-  ENTERTAINMENT
-  CIVIC
-  BAR / RESTAURANT
-  OFFICE
-  UTILITY
-  COMMERCIAL - RETAIL
-  COMMERCIAL - SERVICE
-  PARKING
-  RESIDENTIAL - MULTI FAMILY
-  RESIDENTIAL - SINGLE FAMILY
-  NONE PROVIDED

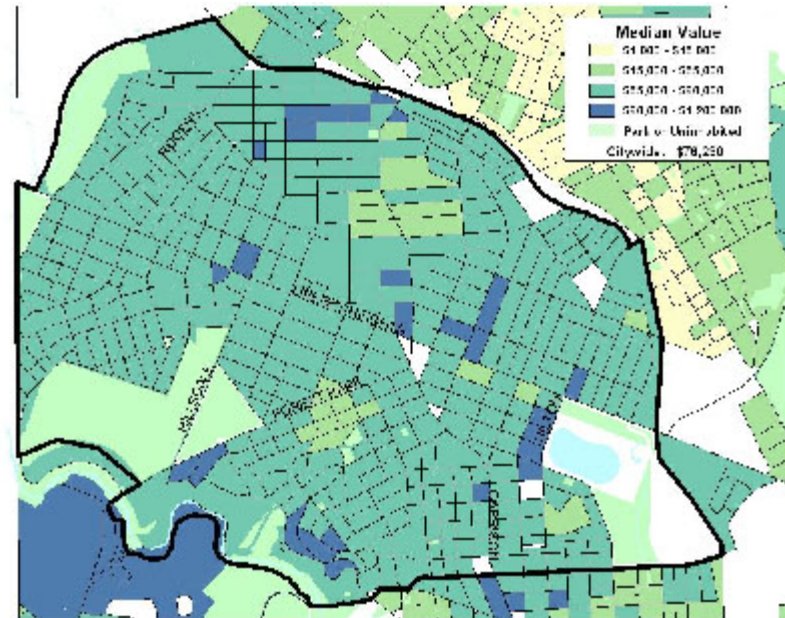
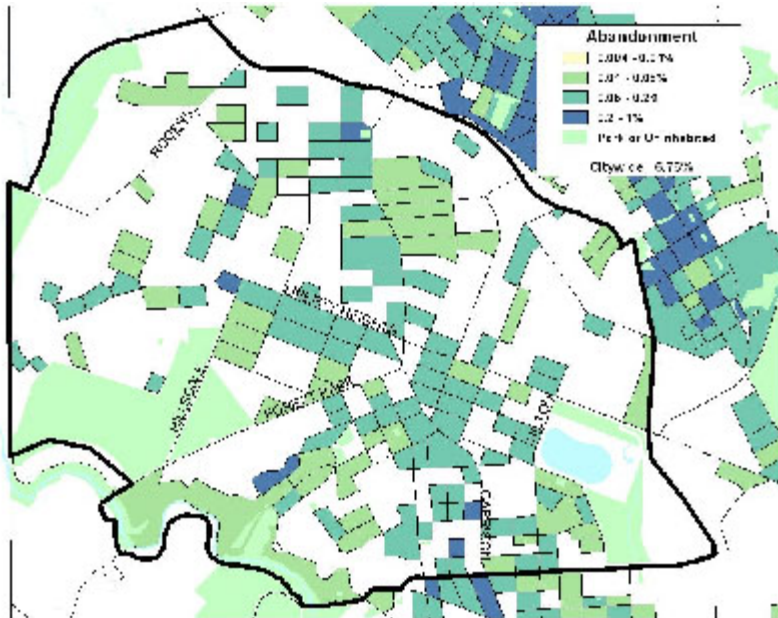
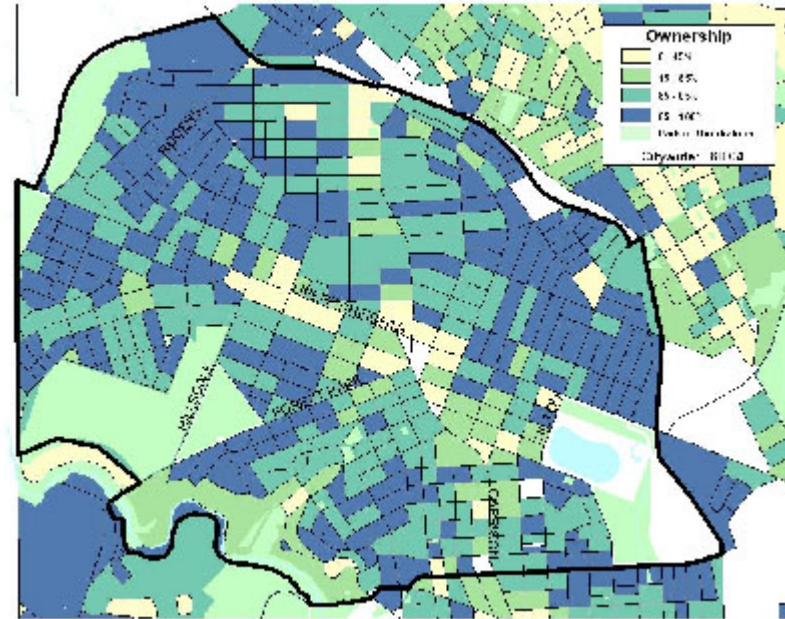


Land Use Map
Courtesy of Allison Platt

Housing

Housing Market

The housing market can be summarized by looking at three key data factors: Abandonment, Homeownership, and Assessed Value. In general, abandonment levels within the cluster are significantly lower than other portions of Baltimore City, but there is a concentration of abandonment along the Garrison Boulevard corridor. Similarly, homeownership rates are high throughout the cluster, but are somewhat lower along Garrison Boulevard. Assessed values throughout the cluster fall within the \$55,000-\$90,000 range. Areas with lower abandonment rates are generally at the higher end of the range and areas with higher vacancy rates are generally at the lower end of the range.



Citywide Housing Market Typology

The Baltimore Housing Market Typology uses the three aforementioned data factors to categorize market conditions. The categories help identify appropriate strategies to address particular conditions in a neighborhood.

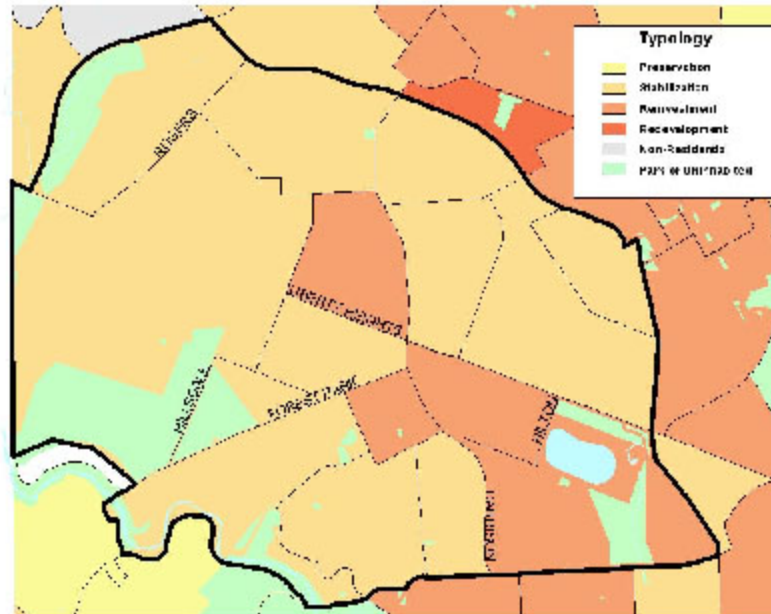
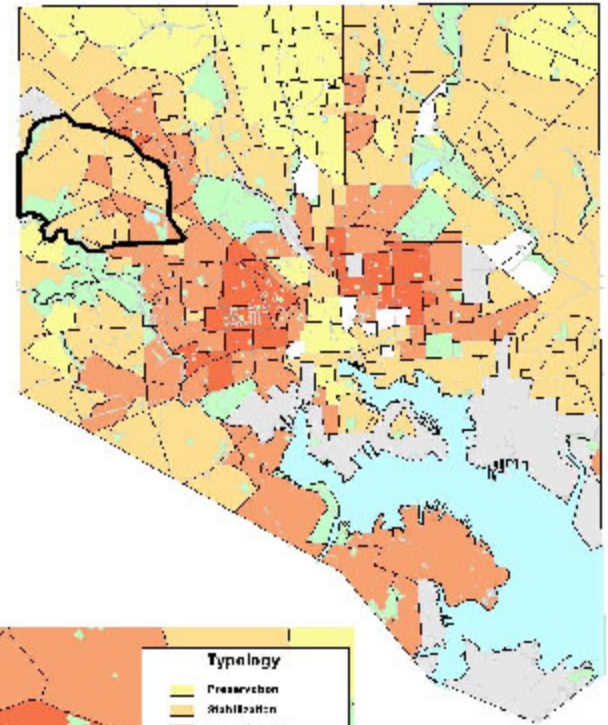
Preservation Areas. Neighborhoods in the “preservation” category represent healthy, attractive areas with high owner-occupancy rates and high property values. The housing stock is well maintained and vacancy and abandonment rates are very low.

Redevelopment Areas. On the other end of the spectrum, “redevelopment” neighborhoods have seen significant deterioration of their housing stock and ended up with dense concentrations of abandoned buildings and vacant lots. Traditional market forces are not working in these areas, nor are they likely to be re-established soon.

In between these two extremes are the middle neighborhoods - the “stabilization” and “reinvestment” neighborhoods.

Stabilization Neighborhoods. Neighborhoods in the “stabilization” category are mostly found in the outer ring of the city. These neighborhoods have homeownership rates nearly as high as Preservation Areas and vacancy rates nearly as low. However, median values in these neighborhoods are appreciably lower than in Preservation Areas.

Reinvestment Neighborhoods. Neighborhoods in the “reinvestment” category find themselves at a crossroads. These neighborhoods have moderate real estate values, average homeownership rates, and substantial vacancy rates, although not as substantial as Redevelopment Areas. Without intervention these neighborhoods could find themselves with widespread vacancies.

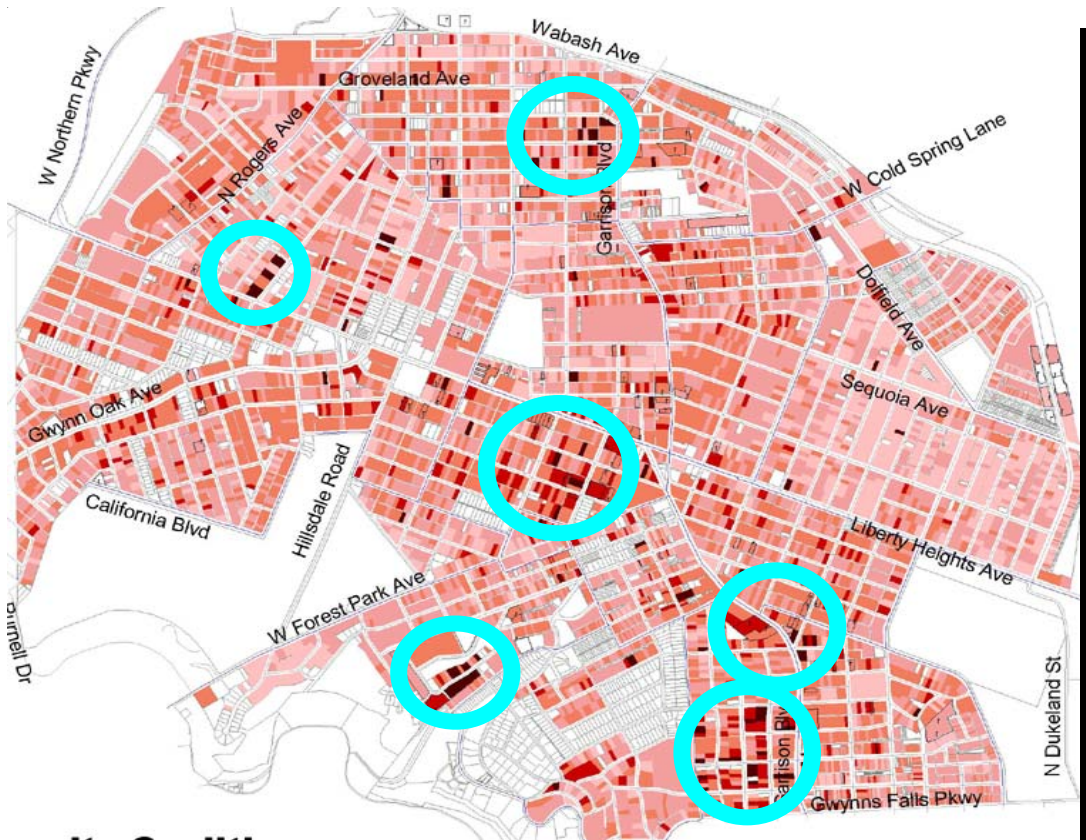


Housing

Neighborhoods in the Middle

In Stabilization and Reinvestment neighborhoods, the real estate market is often not quite strong enough to respond to scattered problems and the images of the neighborhoods suffer accordingly, exaggerating the initial problem. Also, unlike Preservation Areas, many of the homes in Stabilization areas are not maintained and upgraded to the modern standards of the housing market, as shown in the Building Conditions map below. Unlike Preservation areas, where the housing market is self-propelling, there is a need for modest intervention in the real estate market in these neighborhoods. Targeted interventions, such as intervention buying, code enforcement, and selective demolition, will have a tremendous impact.

One of the assets of GNCC is that homeowners can buy a lot of house for a relatively modest price. However, many houses in the area, particularly the large frame houses, require substantial sums of money to upgrade and maintain. Given the relatively low values, homeowners hesitate to spend a lot of money on improving their house because they are afraid they won't recoup the cost when they sell. It becomes a self-fulfilling cycle: because so many people hesitate to make improvements, the housing market does not appreciate; because the housing market does not appreciate, homeowners hesitate to make improvements. The hot real estate market will help resolve this dilemma, but efforts to actively promote maintenance and investment are needed.



Building Conditions

Courtesy of Allison Platt



LEGEND

- Mf_3ormore.shp
- 1 Dot = 40
- NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARY
- SURVEYED BUILDING CONDITIONS
- Renovated
- Good
- Needs minor imprv.
- Substandard
- Dilapidated
- No Data
- STREET CENTERLINE

Curb Appeal

To be marketable, neighborhoods, like individual houses, need curb appeal. For a house, curb appeal is determined by the exterior condition of the house and yard. Is the house freshly painted? Is the landscaping attractive? Does the house demonstrate pride of ownership?

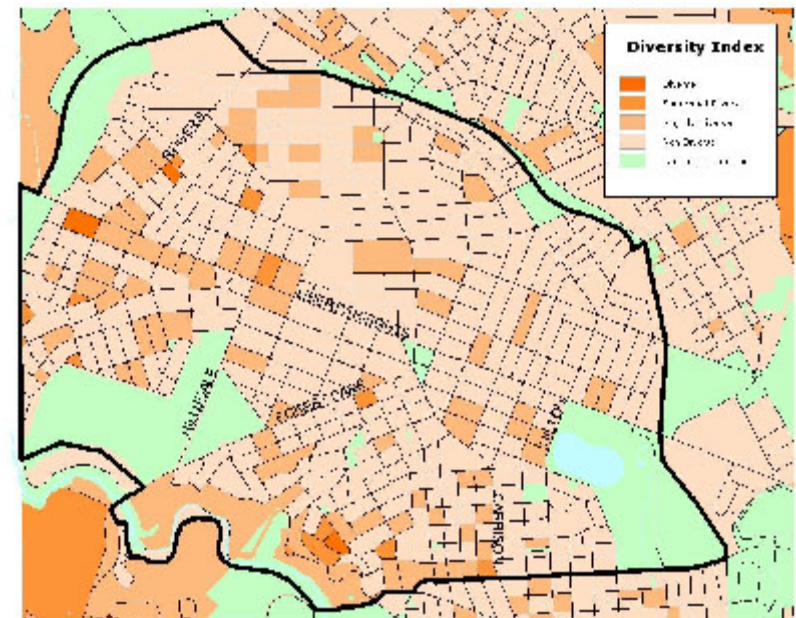
For a neighborhood, curb appeal is the sum of the curb appeal of the homes within the neighborhood. Friendly competition, such as the Painted Ladies contest in Charles Village, or organized block projects, such as the porch lattice project in Garwyn Oaks, can be used to improve a neighborhood's curb appeal.



In addition, new development can add to or detract from a neighborhood's curb appeal. New development should compliment the existing housing stock. Design guidelines and a design review panel can ensure that new development contributes to a neighborhood's curb appeal.

Diversity

In most respects, GNCC is very diverse. The housing stock is extremely diverse, probably as diverse as anywhere in the region. The range of housing sizes and styles creates a naturally occurring mixed income neighborhood that is attractive to various religious groups, age groups, and family types. The one factor where GNCC is not diverse is race. As the map below illustrates, the probability of people from different races encountering each other is extremely low throughout most of the cluster. GNCC is more than 95% African American. According to a recent newspaper article there is growing interest among suburban middle class African Americans to move back to an urban environment that is mostly African American. GNCC offers an attractive ethnic enclave to meet this demand. On the other hand, the real estate market is constricted because instead of attracting buyers from throughout the region, the area is only attracting buyers from one segment of the population. This limitation on the real estate market depresses sales prices.



Housing Recommendations

A. Improve maintenance of homes

Actively promote investment.

- Develop quarterly workshops on specific maintenance topics, including landscaping and weatherization.
 - Create and distribute contractor/resource list for home improvement projects.
 - Provide counseling to help residents use available programs, including city programs, for home maintenance and improvement.
 - Create and distribute maintenance handbook.
 - Create a model house that doubles as GNCC office space.
 - Sponsor block contests. Offer home improvement related prizes.
-

Offer assistance to homeowners to assist with home improvements.

- Develop non-income restricted programs to assist residents with home maintenance. Require that a portion of each home improvement loan/grant is used for improving the exterior of the property.
- Pursue national historic register designation for GNCC neighborhoods as means to stimulate property preservation.
- Train pool of residents as handymen to help seniors with small scale home improvements.
- Develop partnerships with home improvement stores.

Improve Code Enforcement.

- Each month provide City's Code Enforcement team with a list of 5 top priorities in a given neighborhood. Neighborhoods assist with prosecution of cases for these priorities by providing letters and testimony in Housing Court as needed.
- Encourage neighborhoods to participate in Community Partnership Program.
- Create a 311 patrol. Train residents to observe, record, call in, and follow up on 311 items. Track response rates with Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods.
- Contact landlords to form property owners association and determine how to improve rental properties. GNCC may decide to offer services to landlords, such as tenant screening or property management.
- Work with Community Law Center to provide technical assistance for nuisance abatement and code enforcement issues.
- Identify partner to take possession of problem properties or develop GNCC's capacity to take possession of problem properties.
- Monitor and report vacant houses to inspectors. Conditional uses are invalid after being vacant for one year and a vacant house notice is the official indication of vacancy.

B. Advocate for ‘smart’ development and design

Review current land use laws and recommend appropriate changes.

- Conduct zoning and land use study.
 - Conversions to multi-family
 - Conversions to group homes
- Combine existing urban renewal plans to create a linear urban renewal plan for Liberty Heights Avenue and Garrison Boulevard.

Improve community capacity to participate in development review process.

- Form consistent, core group of community stakeholders to serve as development and design review task force.
- GNCC should ensure that member neighborhood associations and residents are given notice of proposals and planned projects.
- Work with Planning, BDC, and HCD to have all development proposals come to GNCC task force before approval.
- Work with Planning to have all projects where design issues cannot be resolved between the task force and developers go to the City’s Urban Design and Architectural Review Panel.
- Host workshops to improve resident’s advocacy capacity regarding development and design issues.

C. Improve housing options and support residents

Offer assistance to current and potential homeowners.

- Provide housing counseling.
 - Short term - Partner with existing providers of pre-homeownership counseling.
 - Long term – Evaluate capacity and willingness of existing providers to form partnership with GNCC to create a one-stop-shop housing office that includes pre- and post-homeownership counseling.
- Partner with City and others to provide financial management courses, IDAs, etc. to assist people in becoming ready for homeownership.
- Support neighborhood-based community building activities such as welcome packages, events, and workshops.
- Provide estate planning.

Increase supply of quality housing

- Inventory and land bank vacant lots until locations are ready for development.
- Develop new housing stock to attract buyers.
 - Short term – Market available lots to individuals and developers.
 - Long term – GNCC will partner with or become non-profit developer
- Explore development of “Oakfield Park.”
- Facilitate the development of non-subsidized senior housing.
- Facilitate the development of market rate rental property.

Build off assets.

- Develop block projects to increase visual effect of streetscapes.
- Develop block projects near assets such as schools and parks.

Housing

Recommendations

D: Marketing

Showcase the assets of the neighborhood.

- Develop marketing tools to showcase community assets, properties for sale, and home buying options. Tools might include a website, brochures, newsletter, home buying workshops and community tours.
 - Participate in events to promote living in GNCC including the Live Baltimore home buying events, Teacher and Officer Next Door programs, Live Near Your Work, others.
 - Create inventory of 'model' homes to showcase renovation options, modern amenities, and affordability.
-

Identify and capture potential market demand.

- Create marketing materials that compare GNCC to suburban locations in terms of commuting time, access to cultural amenities, square footage of houses/sales price, etc.
- Network with local employers to encourage employees to live in GNCC. Provide flyers about counseling, incentives, etc. to be distributed with paychecks. Encourage employers to participate in Live Near Your Work.
- Network with area realtors and with Live Baltimore preferred agents.
- Encourage current residents to show off where they live to friends and family by hosting family reunions and other special events.

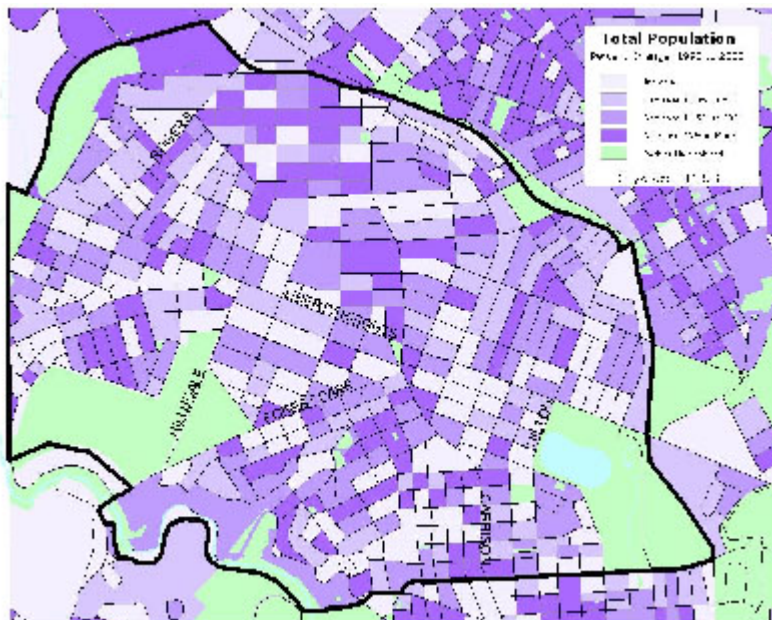
E: Create GNCC Housing Program

Hire staff to coordinate and implement housing strategies.

Commercial

Population Loss

While Baltimore City has experienced consistent population losses since the 1950s, GNCC has experienced a mixture of population increases and population losses. Even though some portions of GNCC have gained population, the area as a whole lost more than 10% of the population between 1990 and 2000.



Declining population means less density. While the American Dream is often portrayed as living in a low density area, decreasing density usually mean decreases in buying power. With decreased buying power, the neighborhood can no longer support the same level of services. Assuming the population continues to decline, total expenditure potential for the GNCC trade area is expected to decrease over the next several years by 2.8%,

Grocery Store

Despite decreases in buying power, there is unmet demand for a 35,000 square foot grocery store, with 31,000 square feet for food and 4,000 square feet for a pharmacy. The commercial area at the intersection of Liberty Heights Avenue and Gwynn Oak Avenue is probably the largest commercial area within the cluster and provides a unique opportunity to site a full service grocery store.



Courtesy of Allison Platt



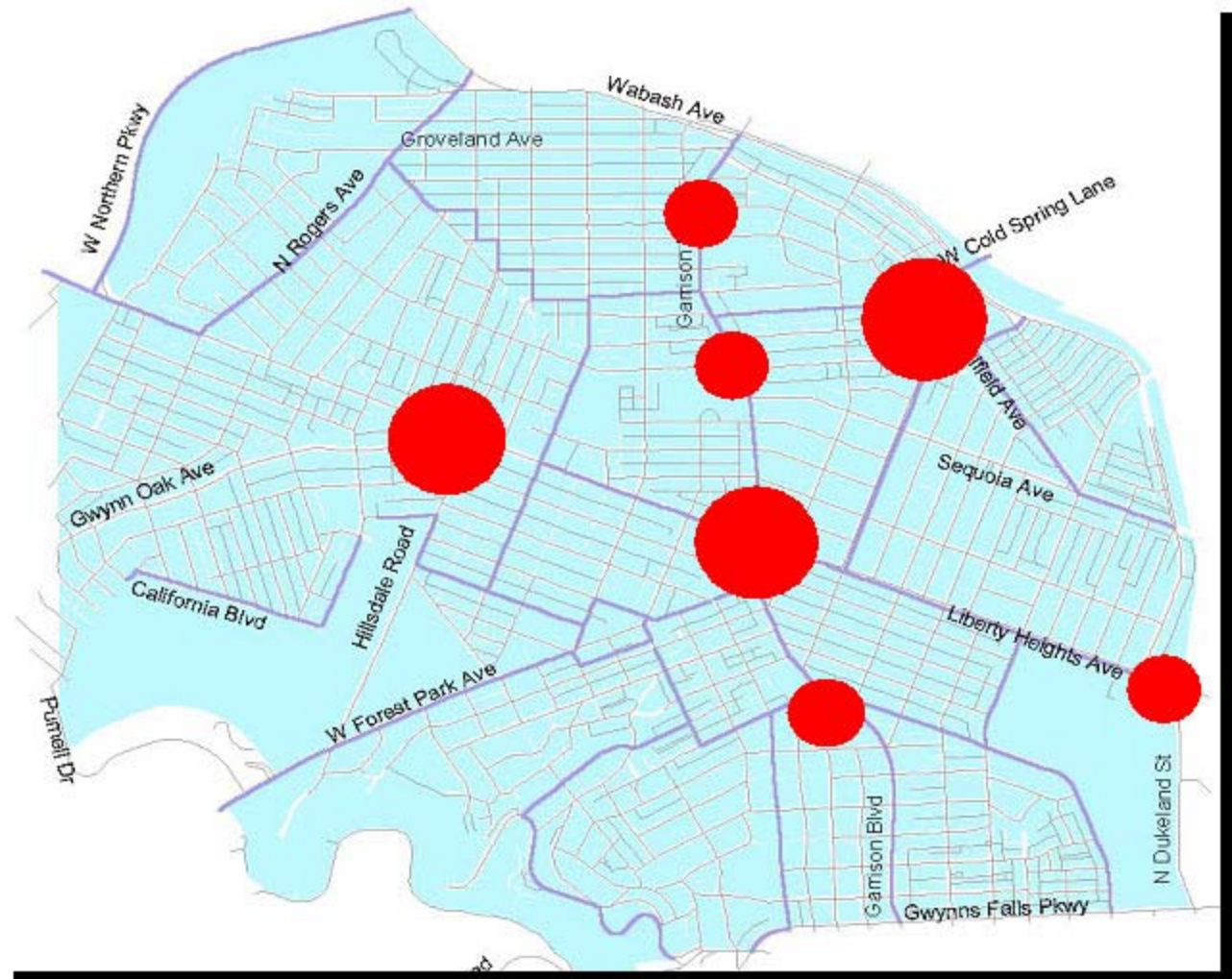
When the SuperPride chain went out of business, GNCC was left without a grocery store. Because the SuperPride site alone is not large enough to accommodate a full service grocery store, the site will be combined with surrounding properties.

Commercial Corridors and Nodes

Unlike many commercial corridors in Baltimore City, the commercial activity along GNCC's major corridors is concentrated at key nodes rather than scattered the length of the corridor. Along Liberty Heights Avenue and Garrison Boulevard, there are two major commercial nodes and four neighborhood commercial nodes. Although commercial activity is concentrated at commercial nodes, the spaces are uninviting and do not meet residents shopping needs. Land use regulations, streetscape treatments, and design guidelines should be considered for the entire corridors with special attention to the commercial nodes.

Pedestrian Friendly

Whether walking from home or from the parking lot, everyone approaches commercial corridors by foot. Creating a beautiful, safe path for pedestrians is as important as creating a beautiful, safe street for vehicles. Wide sidewalks, street furniture, pedestrian scale lighting, and plants contribute to a safe and pleasant pedestrian space. In addition, it is important for pedestrians to be able to safely cross busy streets.



Commercial Nodes

Courtesy of Allison Platt

Commercial Recommendations

A: Engage merchants

Develop active merchants associations

- Develop marketing plan to promote commercial areas and programs. Marketing tools might include a website, brochures, and an expanded GNCC newsletter.
- Pursue opportunities for new businesses to hire from within the community.
- Communicate with owner of business about problems that arise before complaining to government officials.

B: Improve appearance & functionality of gateways and commercial areas

Improve public safety

- Eliminate loitering
 - Develop and enforce restrictions on hours of operation
-

Visually enhance streetscapes

- Design and implement physical changes to include decorative lighting, uniform signage, improved facades, trash receptacles, landscaping design
 - Utilize Baltimore Development Corp. façade improvement and gap financing programs
 - Pursue code enforcement
 - Manage overgrown trees
-

Create more pedestrian friendly environments

C: Define and attract appropriate uses for gateways and commercial areas

Attract appropriate uses for gateways and commercial areas.

- Attract quality supermarket with pharmacy to intersection of Liberty Heights and Hillsdale.
 - Attract diverse services and amenities.
 - Work with Baltimore business community to identify economic development niches within GNCC boundaries.
 - Establish commercial/residential mix along gateways.
-

Review current land use laws and recommend appropriate changes.

- Combine existing urban renewal plans to create an urban renewal plan for Garrison Boulevard and Liberty Heights Avenue.
-

Improve community capacity to participate in development review process.

- Work with Planning, BDC, and HCD to have all development proposals come to GNCC task force before approval.
- Work with Planning to have all projects where design issues cannot be resolved between the task force and developers go to the City's Urban Design and Architectural Review Panel.
- Form consistent, core group of community stakeholders to serve as development and design review task force.
- Host workshops to improve resident's advocacy capacity regarding development and design issues.

Open Space and Recreation

Recreation

Open space is plentiful within the cluster. Hanlon Park, Forest Park Golf Course, and Powder Mill Park have a combined size of 283 acres, more than twice the size of Patterson Park. However, there are limited recreation opportunities, at least structured, supervised recreation opportunities. While open space is important for its aesthetic characteristics and its recreation potential, *programmed* recreation is just as important, for both health and public safety reasons.

Recreation activities are an excellent way to stay fit — and out of trouble.

The easiest way to engage more people in recreational activities is to advertise, enhance, and expand programs and opportunities that already exist. Liberty Recreation Center, located at Liberty Elementary, provides year round indoor, structured, supervised recreation. Many area residents complain that there are no recreation opportunities in the neighborhood, but they are unaware of the services offered at the center. Thus, the first step in getting more people to engage in organized recreation is to advertise the various opportunities that are available. However, advertising should not occur in isolation because increasing demand, without increasing supply, will only frustrate residents.

GNCC should recruit volunteers to provide additional staff assistance to allow the Recreation Center to offer additional programs and longer hours. As much as possible, additional programming should be either family oriented or inter-generational to engage youth, teens, and adults in recreation, not just young kids.

In addition to Liberty Recreation Center, the public schools, especially Forest Park Senior High School, offer an extraordinary opportunity to provide recreational programming using existing facilities. If GNCC is able to recruit more volunteers to assist with recreational programming than the Recreation Center can support, some of the activities might be able to take place at one or more of the schools. The schools already have many of the facilities, such as gymnasiums, playgrounds, fields, tracks, pools, etc. that are used for recreational activities, but these facilities are only being used during the school day.



Hanlon Park

Located at the entrance to the cluster, Hanlon Park is one of the cluster's jewels. The park is an incredible asset, but is in need of some tender loving care. By establishing a Friends of Hanlon Park organization that draws from the Greater Northwest Community Coalition as well as from the neighborhoods south of Gwynns Falls Parkway, the park will receive the kind of attention it needs to blossom into a first class recreational space. The Friends of Hanlon Park hope to encourage and support better use of the park for programmed recreation and for events, which will necessitate improving maintenance, appearance, and facilities.

The Friends of Hanlon Park will need to engage stakeholders in a master plan for the park to determine what improvements are needed. Initial ideas include: improved jogging path with exercise stations and public art, improved picnic pavilion with appropriate amenities, such as parking, bathrooms, weekend trash collection, and improved visibility and access from surrounding neighborhoods.

Facilities and Maintenance

Maintenance of many of the public facilities and other aspects of the public realm within the cluster is inadequate. Some of the facilities, like the Forest Park Library Branch are architectural gems, but the condition of the grounds and the buildings themselves are unsightly. Other facilities, such as the outdoor recreation facilities at Forest Park Senior High School, need to be upgraded and modernized.

In many cases, the facilities need to be studied to determine how to make safer spaces. The principles of crime prevention through environmental design (CEPTED) should be applied to key public spaces.



Open Space and Recreation Recommendations

A: Improve and increase recreational programming

Enhance Liberty Recreation Center

- Advertise programs and activities to engage more participants
 - Recruit volunteers to provide additional staffing
 - Increase family programming
 - Review hours of operation to institute weekend schedule
-

Use school facilities for recreational purposes

- Use school facilities to supplement space at recreation center
 - Explore indoor pool opportunities at Forest Park Senior High School
 - Encourage GNCC schools to allow summer camps to operate within their facilities
 - Raise supplemental funds to enhance existing school projects and plans.
-

Offer year-round recreation opportunities for all ages

- Develop and publish list of recreational activities currently offered at each school and recreational facility.
 - Sponsor activities such as concerts, family picnic days, outdoor movies in the parks or at the schools, GNCC Golf Day
 - Explore partnerships with Parks and Recreation, Parks and People, Outward Bound, after school programs at schools, Forest Park Senior Center, PAL Center, Forest Park Golf Course, and others
-

B: Establish Friends of Hanlon Park

Create Friends of Hanlon Park to coordinate and implement open space strategies

C: Improve facilities and maintenance at parks and public buildings

Develop physical improvement plans and maintenance requirements for each park and designated open space

- Hanlon Park
 - Forest Park Golf Course
 - Gwynns Falls Trail
 - Penhurst Park
 - West Arlington Water Tower
-

Engage youth in care and maintenance of park and recreation areas

- Work to develop program for students to maintain park and recreation areas for service learning hours and summer work programs.
-

Improve public buildings and the properties surrounding them.

- Callaway Elementary School
 - Replace fire-damaged playground equipment
- Hilton Elementary School
 - Proceed with playground greening project
- Forest Park Library Branch No. 14
 - Conduct 'crime prevention through environmental design'
- Forest Park High School
 - Improve track, field and tennis courts
- Garrison Middle School
 - Improve grounds for outdoor recreation sports fields
- Liberty Recreation Center
 - Install camera to deter vandalism
 - Increase exterior lighting
 - Clean playground regularly
 - Ensure dumpster is emptied as needed
- Preparatory Academy
 - Improve landscaping to blend with residential properties
 - Install sign

Public Safety

Organize and Educate

The efforts of law enforcement officials are multiplied exponentially when paired with educated and organized residents. Whether its engaging in Citizens on Patrol or publishing newsletters to educate residents about safety issues, citizens can take an active role in making their neighborhoods safer.

In addition to assisting with general safety issues, citizens can focus on issues that are particularly vexing in their neighborhoods. For example, the Garrison Boulevard corridor has ongoing problems with both prostitution and juvenile delinquency. By focusing on these issues, and partnering with other organizations dealing with the same issues, residents can pro-actively address these problems.

Traffic Safety

The most common public safety concern relating to traffic is speeding. A combination of speed humps, additional stop signs, greater police presence, and other traffic calming devices should be investigated to mitigate the numerous instances of speeding. Given the extent of the speeding problems it may be necessary to consider the speeding as a neighborhood-wide issue in addition to the specific circumstances of each location. Are the side streets in the cluster too wide, and thus encourage drivers to speed? Are the major corridors too slow, and thus encourage drivers to take short cuts and speed through residential neighborhoods? Should special precautions be taken around elementary and middle schools to try to prevent speeding?



Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

The built environment can be designed and maintained to encourage safe behavior. Eyes on the street keep criminal activities to a minimum. Adequate lighting is extremely important in deterring crime. Eliminating opportunities for misconduct is another potential strategy. Public telephones are often used for drug deals and other illegal activities.

Maintenance of trees is another important component of public safety. Overgrown trees impede sight lines and make it difficult to monitor activity. Poor sight lines also create driving hazards. Besides impeding sight lines, trees that are not well maintained are more prone to falling over. In the short term, this creates the risk of hurting people or properties. In the long term, losing mature trees creates public health risks because the trees will no longer be cleaning the air and cooling the earth.

Drugs and Alcohol

Drugs and alcohol pose serious public health risks for users, but they also pose serious public safety risks for the surrounding neighborhood. As in the rest of Baltimore City, a large percentage of the crime in GNCC is related to drugs and/or alcohol. The scenarios are varied, but drugs and alcohol remain a constant: robberies are committed to feed addictions, fights escalate into brawls when someone is intoxicated or high, or a drug dealer defends his turf. In addition, most of the fear of crime is related to loitering associated with the sale and consumption of drugs and/or alcohol.

Public Safety Recommendations

A: Organize and educate residents to promote public safety

Develop comprehensive community policing strategy.

- Encourage and support the establishment of neighborhood-based community policing initiatives such as Neighborhood block captain, City Block Watcher networks, Citizens on Patrol, “Pops on Patrol”.
- Develop campaigns to promote public safety solutions
 - Identify methods residents can implement to decrease burglaries, robberies, and auto thefts such as inscribing personal possessions, storing receipts, increasing exterior lighting
 - Install “No Trespassing” and “No Parking” signs to enable police to appropriately respond to trespassing and loitering calls.
- Increase education about safety issues through workshops, flyers, crossing guards, police, etc.
- Publish newsletter to increase public safety communications.
- Hire community builder to develop and implement public safety initiatives.
- Coordinate and secure resources to support neighborhood initiatives

Develop partnerships with law enforcement groups at all levels of government

- Educate residents on role of police, State’s Attorney, courts, citizens
- Encourage and help each neighborhood to submit community impact statements
- Sponsor community forums with representatives of law enforcement agencies.
- Place police substation in the community, suggested locations
 - Howard Park, Liberty Heights & Gwynn Oak
 - Hanlon, Hanlon Park or Hilton and Piedmont
 - Dorchester, Liberty Heights and Garrison Blvd.

Engage youth in positive activities.

- Develop and implement a plan to work with parents/caregivers to provide referral information for youth to get parents involved
- Establish a Youth Advisory Council to organize and implement programs to emphasize positive use of leisure time such as Jr. Friends of Library.
- Encourage development of structured mentoring, tutorial and recreation programs.
- Turn schools into community schools with activities off hours.
- Investigate opening a video game center
- Investigate opening recreation centers on Saturday and Sunday.

Encourage each neighborhood to participate in the Mayor’s fall and spring cleanups.

B: Create safer traffic patterns

Reduce speeding

- Study traffic patterns to determine if speeding is symptom of other problems.
 - Study specific locations that have been identified as problems. Identify and implement appropriate interventions.
-

Repave alleys and streets

- Coldspring Avenue from Wabash to Callaway
- Garrison Blvd from Gwynns Falls Pkwy to Wabash
- Rogers Avenue from Gwynn Oak to Liberty Heights
- Wabash Avenue from Patterson to Coldspring Avenues
- El Dorado - from Groveland to Oakford
- Groveland - from Belvedere to Garrison
- Powhattan - from Hilton to Denison
- Maine - from Garrison to Hillsdale
- Gwynn Oak - from County Line to Liberty Heights
- Duvall - from Queen Anne to Elsinore

C: Change the physical environment to reduce crime

Improve lighting

- Study specific locations that have been identified as problems. Identify and implement appropriate interventions.
-

Remove public telephones

- Study specific locations that have been identified as problems. Identify and implement appropriate interventions.
-

Maintain trees

- Study specific locations that have been identified as problems. Identify and implement appropriate interventions.
-

Conduct quarterly sweeps to enforce violations for expired license plates and invalid out-of-state tags.

- Study specific locations that have been identified as problems. Identify and implement appropriate interventions.

D: Address drugs and alcohol as threats to public safety

Monitor operations of existing liquor stores

- Document and report liquor license violations to Liquor Board
 - Report criminal violations to Police
 - Report building and zoning code violations to Zoning
 - Protest license renewal of problem liquor establishments at annual renewal hearings
-

Change the law to prevent future drug and alcohol problems

- Work to block inappropriate new liquor licenses in the community
- Work with elected officials to review legislation regarding liquor licenses
- Work with elected officials to review legislation on the sale of drug paraphernalia
- Explore purchasing problem liquor establishments and finding alternatives uses

Education

Parental and Community Involvement

Statistics show that students do better in school when parents and other community members are involved in the education process. Parents and community can volunteer at the school to provide additional support to overworked teachers and administrators. Parents and community can also advocate and fundraise to provide additional resources for the schools. In addition, they can sponsor and promote learning activities outside of school hours.

Lifelong Learning

Education is a lifelong pursuit. To support a community's educational needs requires offering opportunities for people at various stages in the life cycle. As a foundation, every neighborhood needs an excellent system of public schools for kindergarten through twelfth grade. Students should be provided with preparation for college or for immediately starting a career upon graduation. Adults should be provided with opportunities for life skills training, ranging from financial planning to parenting tips.



Education Recommendations

A: Increase parent and community participation in education

Engage parents and students

- Involve students in planning and implementation of GNCC activities including community service opportunities.
- Recruit volunteers
 - Work with schools to document volunteer opportunities such as mentors, classroom, playground, and cafeteria assistants, reading and writing coaches.
- Investigate best practices for community-based schools
- Sponsor/co-sponsor events and activities including career days, parent and student learning together opportunities, debate teams, chess clubs, reading clubs, student government activities.
- Advocate for parent and community representation on all PTA/PTO and School Improvement Teams.

Advocate for resources and support systems

- Seek partners and sponsors for school programs and activities.
- Act as liaison to pool resources to channel to appropriate schools.
- Work with schools to advocate for immediate resource needs.
- Work with elementary and middle schools to support enhancement of their programs and curriculums.
- Identify resources to support professional development opportunities
- Work with schools to improve interior and exterior maintenance

Promote educational programs operating in the GNCC

- Create GNCC school directory / calendar (include programs, curriculums, activities, other educational opportunities).
- Develop and publish a directory of resource and educational activities within the GNCC, to include daycare and pre-schools, after school programs, recreational and PAL programs, mentoring programs, non-public and religious schools, summer camps, and other related programs and activities.
- Develop strategies to increase participation of children in existing programs such as Enoch Pratt Library Forest Park Branch No. 14 and the Community Technology Center.

B: Improve and increase learning opportunities

Provide life skills training

- Partner with schools and other community stakeholders to expand assemblies, trips, projects, and programs that promote life skills training for all ages in the following focus areas:
 - Financial management
 - Parenting skills
 - Technology
 - Communication skills
 - Character Education
 - Cultural Experiences
 - Physical Education
 - GED programs
 - Family Literacy
-

Strengthen Vocational Training Programs

- Promote Forest Park Pathway Academies with middle school families.
- Promote participation on Academy Boards for each Forest Park Academy.
- Expand certification; help schools get certification such as Auto Mechanics.
- Help high schools secure apprenticeship, internship, work study, and/or job shadowing partnerships.

Strengthen College Preparatory exposure

- Encourage college bound programs to conduct outreach in our area.
- Identify and sponsor PSAT and SAT preparation opportunities.
- Identify scholarship programs.
- Sponsor trips to college campuses.
- Work with area colleges to get college students to visit GNCC schools.
- Promote and expand Advance Placement course offerings and Advance Placement Vertical Team Collaboration (Forest Park currently has AP Calculus, English, US History).
- Investigate advance curriculums to supplement elementary and middle school programs such as including The Ingenuity Project.
- Promote college as an attainable goal with parents and students.