



5-Year Strategic Plan // Fiscal Years 2022-2026

# WE GROW TOGETHER

LIVE *Baltimore*  
CITY LIVING STARTS HERE

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# INTRODUCTION

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Live Baltimore has promoted Baltimore City as a great place to live since 1997, doing so as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit since 2001. Over more than two decades, we have attracted and retained thousands of Baltimore City residents by partnering with communities, offering neighborhood tours, and executing creative marketing campaigns. Our success has proudly led to inclusion in Baltimore's operating budget, earned a seat in the Mayor's Cabinet, and established us as the City's official residential marketing organization.

We pursue the work of population growth in a city that has experienced 70 years of continuous residential decline. It is also a city that pioneered discriminatory housing and land use practices that displaced residents of color and prevented others from buying homes. Baltimore's particularly appalling history of redlining led to patterns of segregation and disinvestment that persist today. These past and present inequities are inextricably tied to our area of focus.

In this 20th year of our fully-fledged existence, we release this comprehensive, five-year strategic plan. More intentionally and in more detail than past plans, this document outlines our problem, our progress, and our priorities.

This plan is made up of four main chapters, including this introduction, that elaborate on the context of our work, detail our foundational strategy, outline key strategic priorities for the coming years, and discuss milestones and measurement. We have many to thank for the research, input, and ideas presented in the following pages and we acknowledge dozens of contributors in the conclusion of this document.

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## Process

The effort to develop this plan began in fall of 2020, prior to the expiration of our 2018-2020 Strategic Plan. Our full Board of Directors brainstormed desired outcomes from the process and agreed on a completion schedule. A Strategic Planning Committee, consisting of tenured board members and members of the Executive Committee, was elected to oversee the plan's development.

Two partners were hired to aid in the planning process: Soyun Park, an expert in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, and Spectrum Nonprofit Services, a strategic and financial consulting firm.



At the onset of the planning process, Strategic Planning Committee members worked with Soyun Park to evaluate Live Baltimore’s existing programs, practices, and communications. Together, they then designed a diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice training for members of the staff and board. This program focused specifically on current and past housing discrimination (in Baltimore and beyond) and on applying an equity lens to Live Baltimore’s programmatic design. The lessons from that training are suffused throughout this plan.

Simultaneously, staff and Strategic Planning Committee members worked with Spectrum Nonprofit Services to develop an intended impact statement, to review and revise a program and profitability matrix map (started with the T. Rowe Price Foundation), and to conduct interviews with Live Baltimore stakeholders. In total, 24 interviews were completed with elected and government officials, community groups, partner nonprofits, funders, founders, and former board members. (A full list of these individuals is included on page 41.)

Overall, stakeholders agreed that Live Baltimore is on the right track with our programs. The need for our efforts, our high-quality work, and our unique role in the City were unanimously noted. Lack of adequate financial resources to accomplish our mission was raised as a primary weakness. At the same time, all stakeholders emphasized the importance of continuing to do what we can to offer all neighborhoods—even those that aren’t “Trolley Tour ready”—opportunities to be uplifted through our marketing efforts. Also emphasized was the need to further highlight available assistance for existing residents. Our work with families with children, principally regarding schools, was especially touted. We were also encouraged to continue the development of our research program and our emerging policy work. And, in interview after interview, stakeholders told us: it’s time to assert that our goal is not just promoting Baltimore City living but achieving population growth.

At the conclusion of the process, our consultants emphasized the complex nature of our mission and position in the City, noting in particular our vast array of partners—including universities, businesses, real estate professionals, hospitals and other anchors, City-based employers, fellow nonprofits, government agencies, community groups, and more. They suggested clearer communication about where Live Baltimore’s efforts start, end, and overlap with others. They also encouraged more intentional acknowledgement of our singular role in creating and sustaining a thriving and equitable Baltimore City economy.

Themes from stakeholder interviews, recommendations from our consultants, and input from our board and staff are all incorporated into this and the following chapters.

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## Context

It is important to mention the context in which this plan was developed. On March 11, 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. Schools and businesses shut down throughout the world as the planet entered a period of intense lockdown. Over the next 17 months (and still ongoing at the time of writing) nearly 600,000 Americans died, more than 20 million lost their jobs, and hundreds of thousands shuttered their businesses permanently. Local governments faced tremendous deficits due to revenue declines and difficult cuts were made to municipal budgets. Tales of flight from dense urban areas dominated national news throughout the summer and fall of 2020, while ironically, in Baltimore and elsewhere, record numbers of home purchases were recorded.



In May of 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was murdered by police in Minneapolis. Footage of his murder, and other high-profile killings of Black people by law enforcement, set off a series of protests in cities across the globe, Baltimore among them. Renewed attention to systemic racism, and calls for reforms, reverberated through the 2020 election cycle and beyond, and reshaped policy debates in important ways.

## Equity

Given Baltimore's previously cited history of discriminatory housing practices, and their persistent impacts, we begin our strategic plan by discussing equity. Equity does not reside in one section of this plan; rather it is an overarching goal applied to all its contents.

Later sections of this document plainly outline the levers to increase Baltimore City's population, what can be done to pull these levers, and where Live Baltimore will take responsibility. However, they do not fully capture our intentions on the matter of racial equity.

To be clear, no strategy will succeed if Black lives and property continue to be devalued in our city, region, state, and nation.

With this belief, Live Baltimore recommits itself to a tenet which was central to our founding: ensuring that our work celebrates the City's diversity and works against the racism that has driven too many residents away.

- **First**, Live Baltimore will partner only with those organizations that share our values.
- **Second**, where the work to end racism, and to improve the wellbeing of marginalized groups, extends beyond the purview of our mission, Live Baltimore will be an active ally. Be this through our statements, financial contributions, or organized volunteer efforts, there will be no question as to where Live Baltimore stands on the pressing issue of racial discrimination.
- **Third**, Live Baltimore will continue to foster an inclusive organization in which staff, board members, volunteers, partners, and others can freely and safely bring their whole selves to the work of population growth.

A commitment to partner only with organizations that share our values will, at times, require difficult choices. To aid in decision-making, Live Baltimore will apply the following criteria when considering collaborations. **Associates must:**

- 1. Acknowledge the impacts of past and ongoing racism on Baltimore's current conditions**
- 2. Have clear diversity, equity, and inclusion standards**
- 3. Proactively aim to eliminate bias in policies, programs, and personnel matters**
- 4. Engage in actions to advance racial equity (through both words and deeds)**

To show our active support for anti-racist efforts, Live Baltimore will budget for racial equity. Inspired by Baltimore City's 1% for Art law, beginning in FY22, Live Baltimore will contribute 1% of our annual partnership revenue to Black-led groups working to advance justice.

As an inclusive organization, Live Baltimore will also implement new pay equity measures, including, but not limited to, adopting a formal salary scale for all positions. Live Baltimore will continue our practice of values-based recruitment and hiring and remove education and experience criteria from job postings, where appropriate. Live Baltimore will continue to offer staff and board members continuing education on issues of equity, inclusion, racial healing, and transformation. We will encourage honest dialogue, continue to have no tolerance for discrimination, and honor diverse viewpoints in all settings.

Additional references to equity and social justice will be found throughout this plan, especially in relation to programs.

## Baltimore City's Population Loss

The causes of Baltimore City's population loss have been well documented and debated. The effects of population loss, however, have less frequently been summarized. Before outlining how Live Baltimore will combat population loss over the next five years, it is important to underscore why our work is needed.

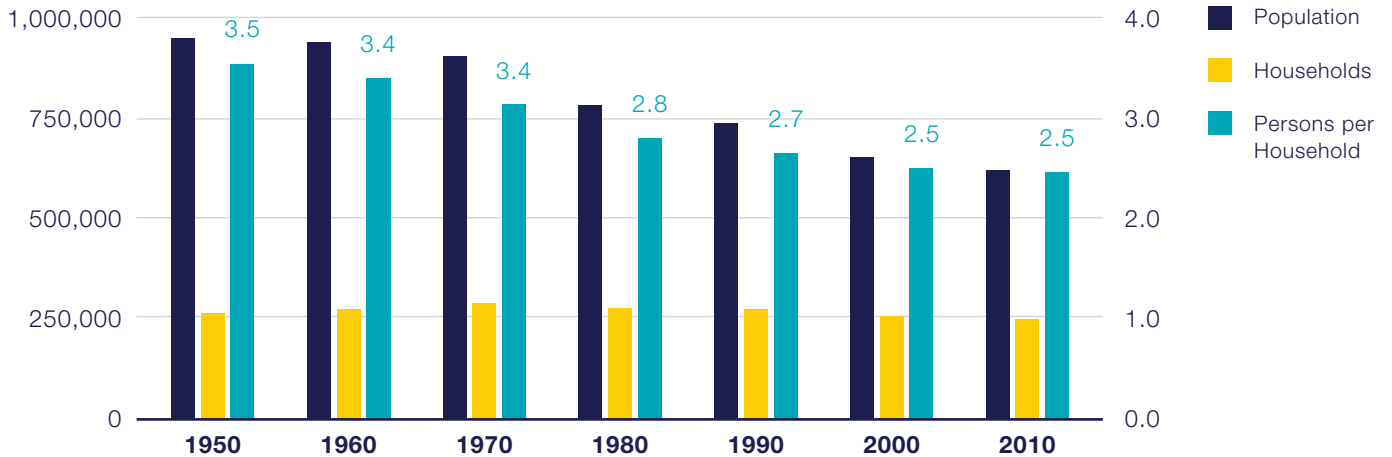
Baltimore City's population peaked at just under 950,000 residents in the 1950 census. Following a steep decline over many decades, 2019 American Community Survey estimates put the currently population at 593,490. (2020 U.S. Census results are expected in summer of 2021.)

Commonly referred to causes of Baltimore's population loss include the loss of industrial jobs; national housing policies (including discriminatory practices like redlining); racism and classism; suburbanization; and the cyclical nature of disinvestment and blight (leading to quality-of-life issues that spur outmigration of residents).

However, as illustrated by the following graph, these causes do not explain most of the City's decline. While its number of residents dropped by 328,747 (-35%) from 1950 to 2010, its number of households declined by only 18,193 (-7%). This is explained by the decrease in household size, from 3.5 persons per household to 2.5 persons per household, which mirrors trends throughout the United States.

If 2010's household size was equal to that of 1950s, Baltimore's 2010 population would have been **885,260**.

## Baltimore City Population & Households

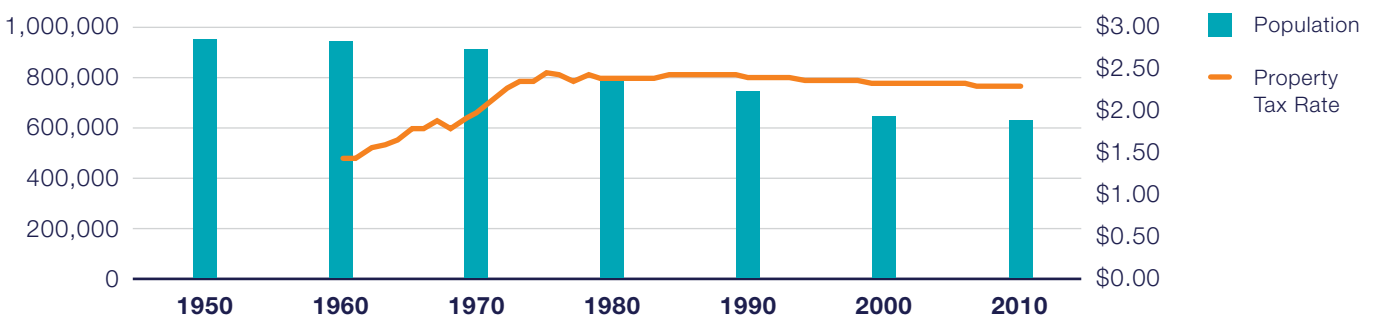


In fact, more than 80% of Baltimore's total decline in residents since 1950 can be explained by the predominance of smaller households—a trend which continues here and throughout the country. It is therefore the combination of smaller households (caused by decreasing household size) and the decline in occupied households (caused by the commonly referred to causes) that fully explains population loss.

No matter how one makes sense of the causes of Baltimore's population loss, its impacts are clear and consequential.

As Baltimore's population declined, the need to support City infrastructure did not. In a city that relies on residential property taxes for more than 50% of its revenue<sup>1</sup>, this meant decades of property tax increases, which crossed the \$2 mark (per \$100 of assessable base) in 1971, peaked at \$2.436 in 1975, and remained at near equal levels through 1989. As illustrated by the chart below, population declines coincided with steep property tax increases between 1960 and 1980.

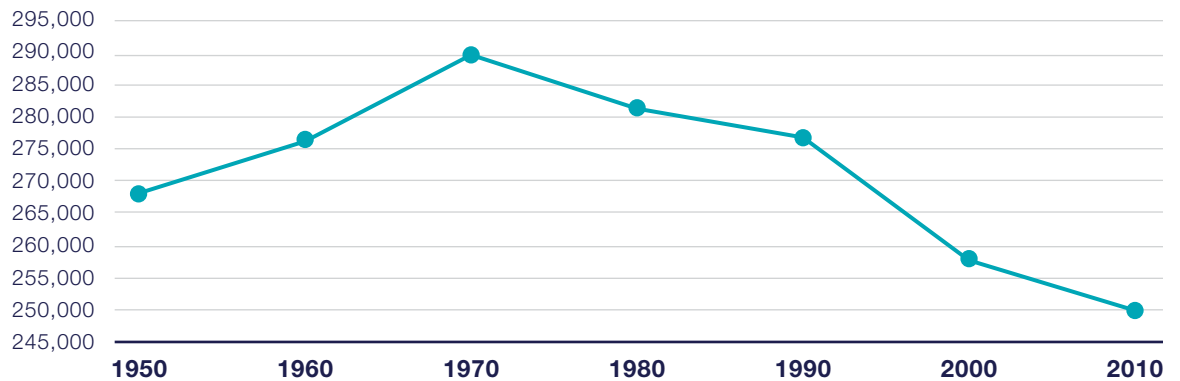
## Population and Property Tax Rate by Year





Population loss—more specifically, the shrinking number of Baltimore households—has led to increased housing vacancy. According to U.S. Census data, the number of City households was highest in 1970, at 289,349. By 2010, this number was reduced by 39,446 (-14%) to 249,903.

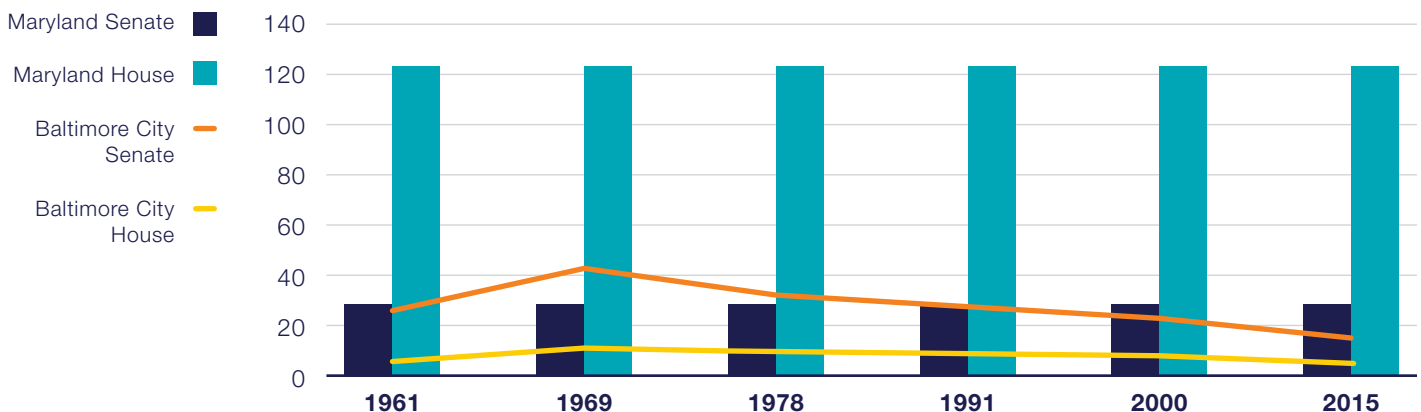
### Baltimore City Households by Year



It is this decline in households, from the 1970s to today, that created Baltimore City's housing vacancy problem. The Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development estimates that the City's number of vacant homes has hovered near 17,000 since 2010<sup>ii</sup>.

Lower population has also meant less political representation for City residents. Until 1970, Baltimore City dominated both the Maryland State Senate and House of Representatives, holding approximately 30% of all seats. Following decades of decline, Baltimore City accounted for only 11% of the House and Senate by 2015. That representation is expected to decline further in the next round of redistricting.

### Baltimore City Representation Over Time



In addition, population decreases have led to peripheral impacts, such as the decline in Baltimore City Public School enrollments<sup>7</sup> (which has led to less State funding for City education), business relocations and associated local job losses, decreased federal funding, and, less quantifiably, negative psychological impacts (such as lessened investor and consumer confidence).

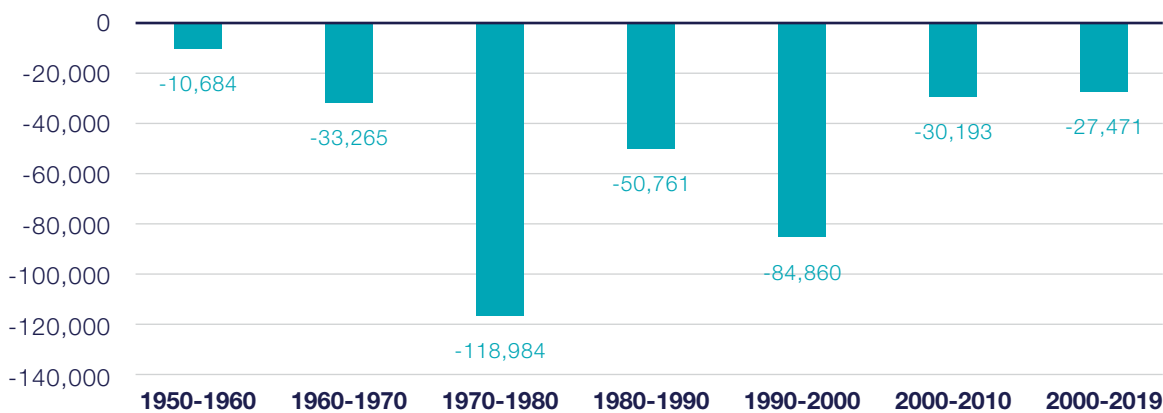
## Live Baltimore's Progress to Date

A seven-decades-in-the-making problem—with complex causes—won't be solved overnight. That said, in planning for the next five years, it's important to demonstrate how Live Baltimore has and has not made progress toward our intended impact over the past 20-plus.

Focusing in on the decades in which Live Baltimore has operated (1997 through today), improvement can be observed in multiple areas.

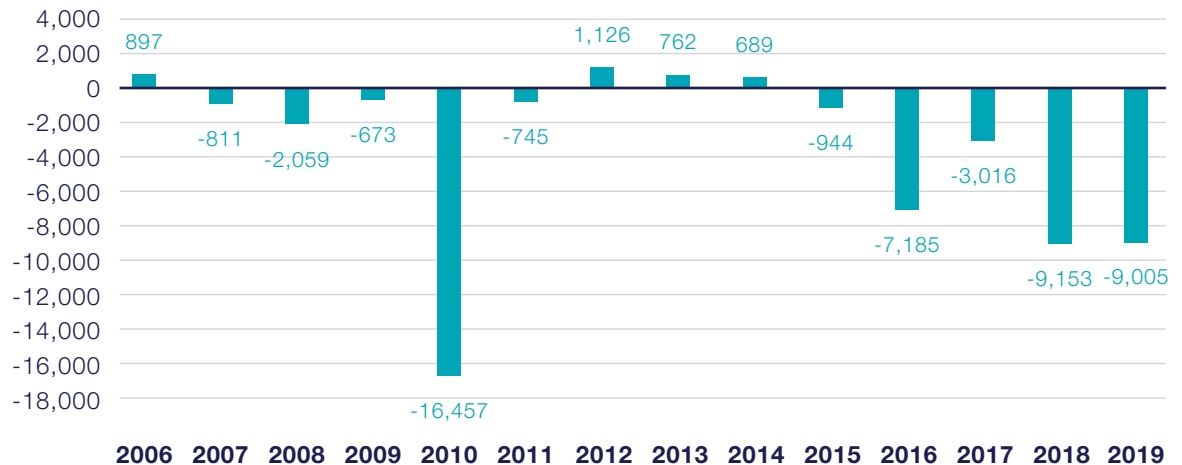
A review of U.S. decennial census data shows that the City's rate of population loss has been cut significantly. Whereas the two decades prior to Live Baltimore's incorporation saw the loss of 135,621 residents, the two decades since recorded a decline of 57,664. In fact, the two decades during which Live Baltimore has operated have seen the smallest drops in population since the 1950s.

### Population Change by Decade



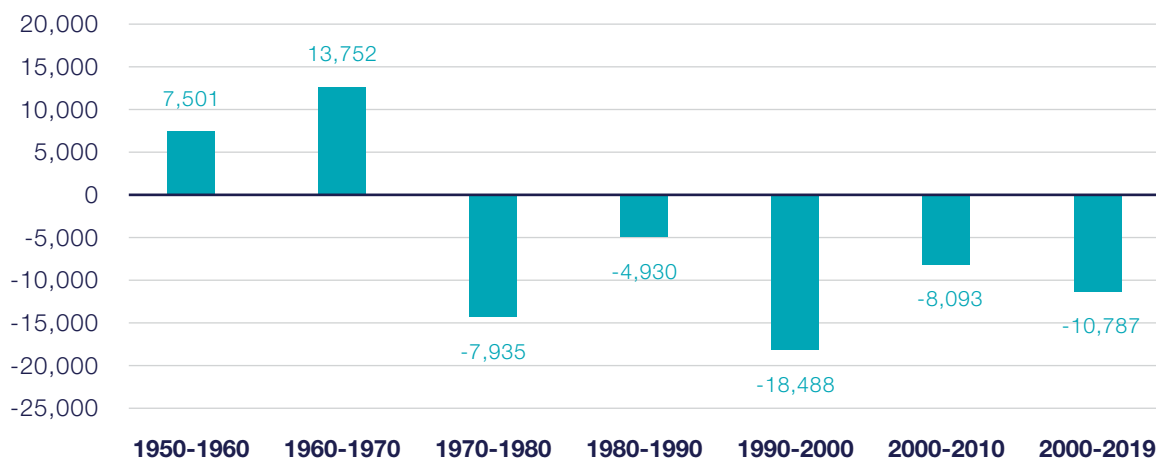
Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), launched in 2005, allow us to drill down more closely on recent annual changes in population<sup>iii</sup>. ACS data shows that, despite major economic and social challenges, Baltimore has experienced population growth in some recent years. From 2005 to 2006 (notably the peak of the housing market prior to the Great Recession) and from 2012 to 2015 (a period of recovery following the housing market crash that began in 2007 and lasted through 2011), population was added to the City.

## Population Change by Year



Like trends in total population, fewer households were lost during the two decades in which we've operated than in the two decades prior. Households dropped by 23,418 between 1980 and 2000. This number was reduced to 18,880 from 2000 to today.

## Household Change by Decade



Captured in this data is the fact that many neighborhoods—which Live Baltimore has supported with its efforts—have significantly revitalized. For example, Patterson Park, which was plagued by vacancy and violence in the 1990s, now has home values above the City's average. Greenmount West, where nearly 75% of homes were once abandoned, is now fully occupied.

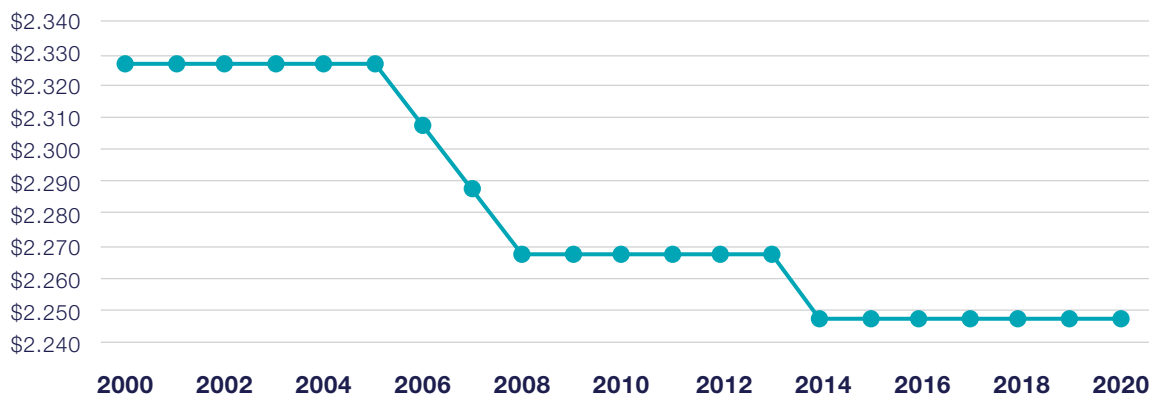
New housing developments have been constructed and successfully rented or sold throughout Baltimore. Live Baltimore has played a role in marketing these developments, including many



multi-family buildings located Downtown and on both sides of the Harbor and many single-family homes in areas such as Uplands, Greektown, Pigtown, the formerly industrial southeast, Orchard Ridge, Eager Park, Heritage Crossing, Medfield, and other areas.

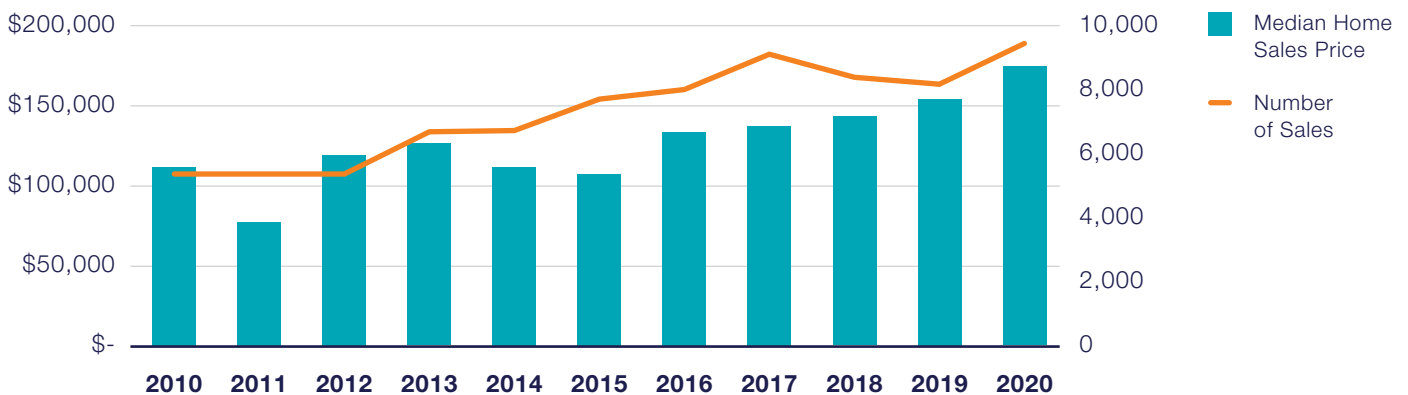
These revitalized communities, new developments, and their residents have grown City revenues to a level that allowed property taxes to be stabilized and even reduced for owner-occupant homeowners. Residents' tax contributions have permitted the full realization of Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake's "20 cents by 2020" property tax reduction plan, which has now set the average rate for residents living in homes they own at \$2.048 (per \$100 of assessed value).

### Property Tax Rate by Year



Thankfully—and to the credit of many, including Live Baltimore—the housing market has also successfully recovered from the Great Recession. Since the bottom of the market in 2011, home values have rebounded citywide, with incremental improvement at all price points. 2021 has so far set records for home sales.

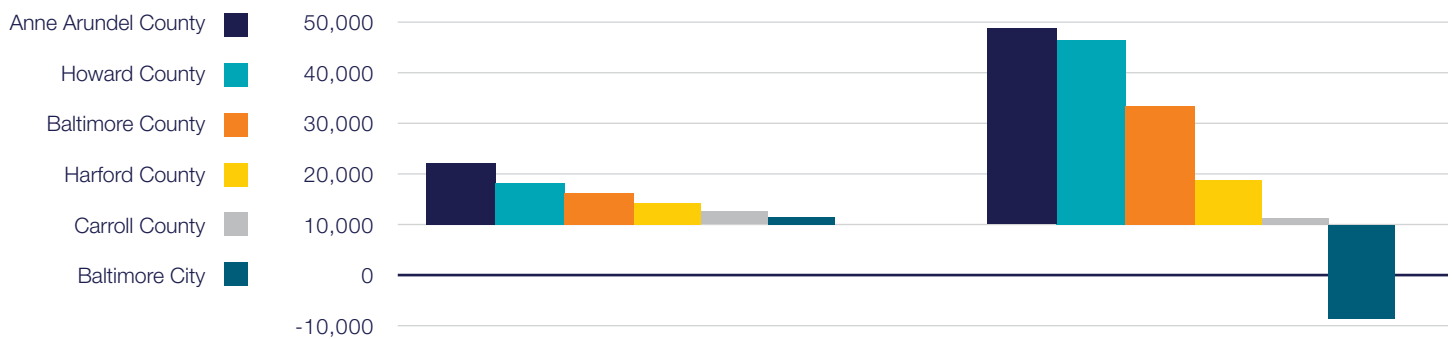
### Baltimore City Home Sales: 2010-2020



Despite these wins, more work is clearly needed.

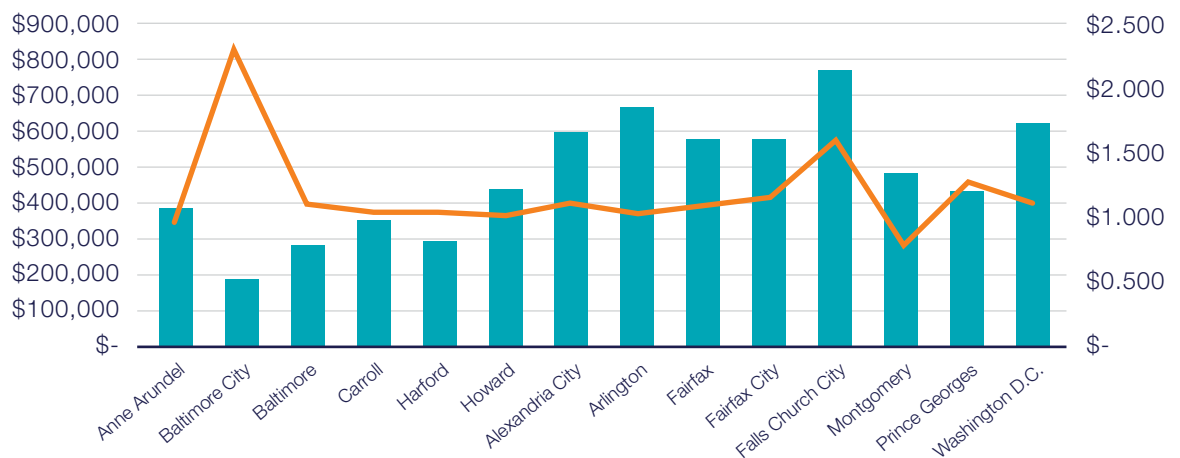
Most importantly, as evidenced by previous and following graphs, the population is still not growing. Housing units and, by relation, residents are not being added in Baltimore City at the rate of surrounding counties. Counties that are adding more housing are seeing their populations grow most rapidly.

### New Housing Construction & Population Change 2010-2018



Baltimore City home values are still lower than those in surrounding counties, limiting homeowners' equity and housing development profitability.

### 2020 Median Sale Price & Property Tax Rate by County / Baltimore & DC Metros



Related to home values, development, and overall housing affordability, as shown above, Baltimore City's property tax rate is also still uncompetitive. This higher tax rate hurts low- and moderate-income Baltimore City residents most<sup>iv</sup>.

Finally, intersecting with these factors, many communities within the City remain in decline. As noted in a 2020 report by Alan Mallach, released by the Abell Foundation<sup>v</sup>, the City's homeownership rate has dropped below 50%, the lowest since 1930. More concerning, much of the City's current drop in population is attributable to a decline in Black households. The City's white population has stabilized after decades of decline, and its immigrant population has grown, but it the City is continuing to lose Black households. **Some key findings related to this include:**

- **The greatest loss of Black population in Baltimore is from predominately Black low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. Since 2000, these neighborhoods have lost over 45,000 people, or roughly 20% of their total population.**
- **These same Black moderate-income neighborhoods account for half of the City's loss of homeowners and have seen the average house lose 30% of its value (in constant dollars) since 2000.**

In general, according to the report, Baltimore has far more lower-income and upper-income neighborhoods, but fewer middle-income neighborhoods, than in 2000.

This uneven decline in neighborhoods, and its resulting uneven impacts on City residents who remain, is a challenge that Live Baltimore seeks to address through its efforts to promote homeownership and population growth in the City.

Building on our successes, and acknowledging the still formidable task ahead, Live Baltimore eagerly approaches its next half decade. The following chapter lays out the foundational strategy that will direct our work.

### Ashburton









# FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGY

Setting the stage for our next five years, this chapter plainly details what we aim to change, where we will focus (and where we will not), and what information will guide us in our efforts.

## Intended Impact, Mission, Vision, and Values

Live Baltimore's intended impact is to grow Baltimore City's population, by assisting current and prospective residents and by celebrating Baltimore as a great place to live, in order to create and sustain an equitable and thriving local economy.

Live Baltimore's name and mission are synonymous: **We promote living in Baltimore City.**

We envision thriving; multi-generational; racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse communities. We envision vacant properties replaced by safe and affordable housing for all. We envision shared spaces that are alive with residents, local businesses, bustling schools, and urban wildlife (in our parks and green places). We envision neighborhood conditions that support families' economic and physical health. We envision a city where home values are not predicated on the race of residents. We envision functioning housing markets in every area, ensuring all families are equally able to build wealth through homeownership (if they choose).

### WE ARE DRIVEN BY OUR VALUES, WHICH INCLUDE:

- 1. Love Baltimore:** We love Baltimore to our cores.  
We treat every neighborhood and every resident with loving kindness.
- 2. Collaborate:** We accomplish more together.  
We work intentionally with residents, communities, partners, and each other.
- 3. Get Results:** We are nothing if not effective.  
We rigorously measure our impact and hold ourselves accountable to outcomes.
- 4. Be Helpful:** We model humility and service. We foster a welcoming environment, in which individuals feel valued and validated in every customer interaction.
- 5. Stay Positive:** We celebrate our wins big and small.  
We rise above negativity while acknowledging room for continuous improvement.

## Core Work

In the introductory chapter of this plan, we outlined the causes and effects of residential decline. The following section drills in further on the causes and discusses what strategies can be leveraged to get Baltimore growing.

Baltimore's decrease in population since 1950 can be understood as a function of two factors: reduced household size (responsible for approximately 80% of total decline) and household losses (responsible for the remainder). Increasing the City's number of residents, therefore, means achieving some combination of more and larger households.

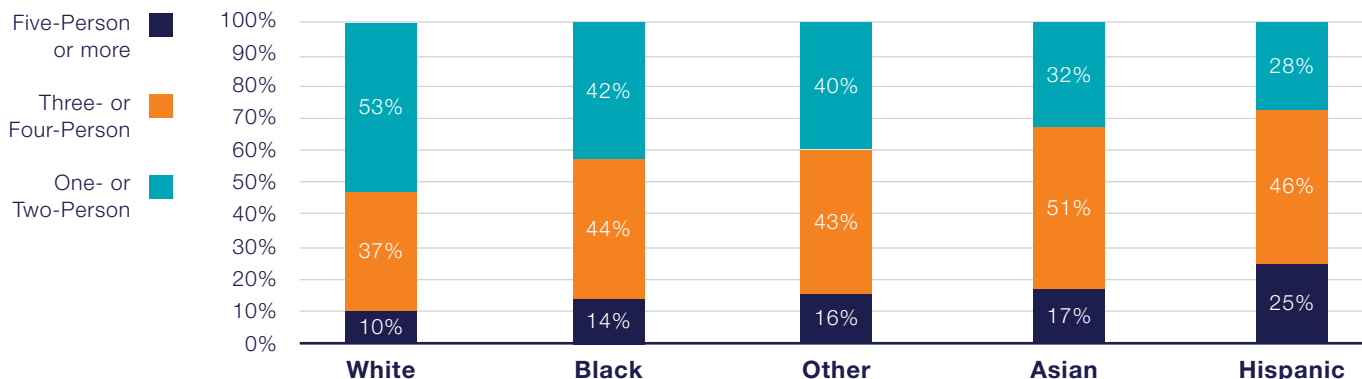
## Household Size x Number of Households = Population

**Because U.S. household size is unlikely to rise<sup>vi</sup>, a focus on increasing the City's number of households is especially essential to growth.**

This isn't to say that household size should be completely ignored in Live Baltimore's strategies. Increasing Baltimore City's household size would require an increase in the number of larger households; in other words, a shift in the balance between one-person and three-or-more-person households. This is conceivable as, according to 2015-2019 ACS estimates, Baltimore City's average household size<sup>vii</sup>(2.45) is less than the State of Maryland's<sup>viii</sup>(2.67) and U.S.'s (2.62)<sup>ix</sup>, suggesting that steps could be taken to bring it more in line with the state and national average.

To increase the number of larger households in the City, two strategies can be employed. First, we can work to retain households with children, which are known to leave Baltimore at higher rates than smaller households. Second, we can work to attract new households with children, and/or multi-generational households. Data suggests this could be achieved by seeking out Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, and Black households<sup>x</sup>, and/or particular religious groups<sup>xi</sup>.

## U.S. Household Size by Race & Ethnicity





To increase the number of households in Baltimore, two conditions are necessary: 1) no net increase in housing vacancies, and 2) growth in the number of occupied housing units. In other words, **fewer households must leave Baltimore City and/or all households leaving must be replaced one-for-one, while more households are simultaneously added.**

Ensuring no net increase in housing vacancies involves multiple factors. First, more households must choose to stay in Baltimore. This will happen only if residents' basic needs are met and if their satisfaction with the City is and remains high. Increased resident satisfaction may require better services, improved community conditions, reduced crime, better performing schools, lower property taxes, more affordable overall costs of living, and other factors related to quality of life. Second, eliminating vacancy must be made easier. Because many properties remain vacant due to legal and title issues, ensuring the ability to legally transfer property is also critical to stemming vacancy increases. Lastly, there must be demand for housing when it becomes available. Neighborhoods must be viewed as good places to invest in and live by both real estate professionals and consumers.

To add households to the city, more housing units must be made available at multiple price points (whether through new construction or through the improvement of existing properties) and occupied. Boosting confidence in housing markets is one way to spur interest and investment among developers and rehabbers. It is also a strategy to convince delinquent owners to improve their own properties.

For new developments and renovated housing projects to be successful, residents' economic opportunities must improve. For this to occur, there must be ample, easily accessible, living wage jobs. Residents must be prepared for these jobs through adequate education and training. Residents must also be without excessive debt (from student loans and other sources). New developments and renovated housing projects will also only succeed if there is demand for the homes and communities in which they are available. Again here, both real estate professionals and consumers must be interested and excited in the housing products that are on the market.

To boost the development and redevelopment of housing, City processes (such as permitting) must be accessible and easily navigable. Projects must also be profitable; costs to develop or redevelop must be low enough, and markets functioning well enough, that sales prices exceed expenses.

At the City's current household size, at least 4,000 more households are needed to add 10,000 residents. 10,000 more households could amount to 25,000 residents—enough to exceed the 2010 population.

For nearly all these strategies to succeed, policymakers must fully understand the economic impact of residents and the threats of continued population loss. Leaders must be invested in population growth for the many conditions outlined to be favorable.

We acknowledge that only some of the previously-described strategies are within Live Baltimore's purview and capacity to impact.

To clarify our role in growing Baltimore's population, the following table summarizes where we can lead, where we can partner or advocate, and where we can simply be supportive of others.

## LEAD

*Retain City residents generally, and families with children specifically, through civic pride initiatives, homebuying help, and school navigation services*

*Market neighborhoods (to consumers and real estate professionals) to create demand for housing*

*Strengthen the housing market (and confidence in the housing market) to spur investment*

*Make the case for City residents' value and the need for City population growth*

## PARTNER OR ADVOCATE

*Attract religious, racial, and ethnic groups that tend toward larger households*

*Help residents access programs that make housing more affordable*

*Attract businesses (and their employees) to the City*

*Reduce residents' debt, especially student loan debt, through financial education and loan programs (such as the Maryland SmartBuy program)*

*Make residential development easier, more profitable, and more successful in functioning housing markets*

*Repair broken housing markets so that development can occur*

## SUPPORT

*Improve quality of life through better City services, improved community conditions, reduced crime, better performing schools, lower property taxes, more affordable overall cost of living, and other factors*

*Ensure the ability to legally transfer real property*

*Protect residents against discriminatory housing and mortgage lending practices*

*Prepare residents for higher paying jobs that enable the ability to afford housing*

Considering where we will lead, partner, or advocate, Live Baltimore defines its core work in four areas.

## Live Baltimore's Core Work



## Data-Driven Direction

We will pursue our core work informed by data. Recently completed major research studies, cited below, offer important insights for targeting our limited resources and maximizing our effectiveness.

Thanks to a 2020 report by Zimmerman/Volk Associates Inc. (ZVA), we know more than ever before about the likely consumers of housing in Baltimore City. We know the size and scope of our potential market. We know where to find likely movers. And we know these likely movers' demographics and preferences. Because of a recently completed major survey of Baltimore City homebuyers (executed by Federal Hill Research Group), we know what drives purchase decisions and what might motivate future moves out of the City. We also know, thanks to a 2020 analysis by Econsult Solutions Inc., the economic value of new residents to Baltimore City and the State of Maryland.

Based on historic migration patterns, and estimated through 2025, 44,335 households could potentially move into existing and new housing in Baltimore City each year<sup>xii</sup>.

This includes households already living in Baltimore and moving within the City and households moving in from other areas. The areas from which Baltimore City households are most likely to move are: 1. within Baltimore City (58%), 2. from Baltimore County (15%), 3. from Anne Arundel and Howard Counties (5%), and 4. from other areas in Maryland and the balance of the United States (22%).

Likely movers are predicted to primarily seek rental housing (59%), with a minority of movers seeking homeownership opportunities (41%). Within the homeownership market, a preference for rowhomes and townhomes (46%) is most likely, followed by a preference for detached homes (37%) and multi-family units such as condos (17%).

Among the potential market, movers are most likely to be younger singles and couples without children (63%). Traditional and nontraditional families (21%) and empty nesters and retirees (16%) make up the remainder of projected consumers.

Movers are likely to come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Households with incomes above 60% of the area median (\$104,000 for a family of four in 2020) are predicted to constitute 58% of renters and buyers. Of these, 34% are likely to have incomes above 100% of the area median.

Detailed consumer profiles of likely movers are included in ZVA's full analysis. It is notable to mention that, if trends continue at historical rates, between 65% and 68% of movers are expected to be Black<sup>xiii</sup>.

Homebuyers in the City are likely to make purchases because they "just like Baltimore," work in Baltimore, or have family or friends in Baltimore<sup>xiv</sup>. Affordability; walkability, accessibility, and convenience; unique features; and a sense of community are among the most appealing neighborhood attributes noted by purchasers.

Homeowners are likely to leave the City primarily for personal reasons (including family and job changes). Deteriorating neighborhood conditions, however, would also be drivers. Notably, most homeowners intend remain in their homes for five years or more once they make a purchase.

Finally, based on the mixed incomes of households projected by ZVA's market analysis, Econsult Solutions estimates that **each added Baltimore household will bring annual average tax revenue of \$4,800 to the City and \$6,400 to the State of Maryland** (including income taxes, tax revenue from household spending, and property taxes)<sup>xv</sup>.

For every 1,000 households added to the City, there will be \$74 million in annual economic impact to Baltimore and \$84 million to the State. These 1,000 households will also support 410 additional City jobs and 460 additional State jobs.

The impact of adding 1,000 households through new construction and housing renovation will be even greater, including \$196 million and 1,150 jobs in Baltimore and \$234 million and 1,340 jobs in Maryland.

With our intended impact, mission, vision, core work, and direction determined, we turn our attention to immediate strategic priorities in the following chapter.

Howard Park









# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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Considering our foundational strategy, this chapter outlines six priority areas for the next five years. These areas include: Enhance & Maintain Results-Oriented Programs, Connect with Communities, Nurture Partnerships & Alliances, Be the Residential Market Authority, Scale Sustainably, and Advocate for Population Growth.

Otterbein



## Enhance & Maintain Results-Oriented Programs

Throughout the development of this plan, stakeholders were asked what Live Baltimore does well, where it could improve, and what more it should be doing. Paraphrasing a common refrain, we were told to “keep up the good work.” We were also encouraged to continue analyzing and disseminating data and to be a strong voice on the importance of population growth.

The below shows how existing and expanding programs align with our foundational strategy.

### Live Baltimore’s Programs (as a function of Core Work)

#### Marketing City Neighborhoods as Great Places to Live

**Neighborhood Advertising**  
**Homeownership Promotion**  
**Real Estate Outreach**  
**Employer Outreach**  
*Data Analysis*

#### Encouraging Residents to Stay in the City

**Homeownership Promotion**  
**School Navigation Services**  
**Charter Waitlist Intervention**  
**School Advertising**  
**Civic Pride Initiatives**

#### Supporting Efforts that Increase the Supply of Housing

*Data Analysis*  
*Government & Public Relations*

#### Advocating for the Importance of Population Growth

*Data Analysis*  
*Government & Public Relations*

**KEY:** Existing programs are **bold**. Expanding and/or new programs are *italic*.

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## Expanding on the titles of these programs:

Our **Neighborhood Advertising Program** promotes Baltimore City communities as great places to live by creating and sharing content through earned and paid media and by offering direct customer service.

Our **Homeownership Promotion Program** helps residents become Baltimore City homeowners by providing education on the homebuying process; helping homebuyers access City, State, and other financial assistance; and by offering direct customer service. Our famous Trolley Tours and Six O’Clock Sessions fall under this program’s scope.

Our **Real Estate Outreach Program** increases the real estate community’s interest and skill in marketing Baltimore City properties by offering continuing education, promotional resources, and direct customer service. Our classes through the Greater Baltimore Board of Realtors are related to this program.

Our **Employer Outreach Program** assists employers in recruiting talent to Baltimore, in executing successful Live Near Your Work programs, and in offering education and direct customer service to employees.

Our **School Navigation Services** demystify the school selection and enrollment process for families with children in Baltimore City. Our Schools 101 events fit within these services.

Our **Charter Waitlist Intervention Program** aids in the retention of families who are unable to access public charter schools. Our annual School Fair is part of this program.

Our **School Advertising Program** promotes Baltimore City Public Schools as options for families to consider by creating and sharing content through earned and paid media and by offering direct customer service.

Our **Civic Pride Initiatives** contribute to a positive city living experience by connecting likeminded individuals and communities in celebration of Baltimore. Our annual birthday party for Baltimore City, Baltimore’s Birthday Bash, is related to this program.

Our expanding **Data Analysis Program** decodes and disseminates local housing market and other data to promote investment and development.

Our expanding **Government & Public Relations Program** emphasizes the importance of residents and population growth to Baltimore City and the State of Maryland.

Equitable outcomes require equitable program design. Therefore, we will continue our commitment to equity in all aspects of our work.

As a nonprofit partner of Baltimore City government, Live Baltimore adheres to Baltimore City Code, Article 1, Section 39-1: Equity Assessment Program<sup>vi</sup>. This section of the City's code states: "Equity" means closing gaps in policy, practice, and allocation of City resources so that race, gender, religion, sexual orientations, and income do not predict one's success, while also improving outcomes for all.

In addition to fulfilling the requirements of this ordinance, Live Baltimore has adopted an equity framework used by the Baltimore City Department of Planning<sup>xvii</sup> and adapted from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network. This framework offers a lens for planning, decision-making, and resource allocation that includes four overarching areas of equity.

With this lens, the following questions will continue to be considered by Live Baltimore's board and staff when developing and executing programs.

- 1. Structural Equity:** What historic advantages or disadvantages have impacted Baltimore City residents' and/or prospective residents' housing decisions?
- 2. Procedural Equity:** How are residents who have been historically excluded from decision-making being authentically included in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs?
- 3. Distributional Equity:** Does the distribution of programmatic resources explicitly account for potential racially disparate outcomes?
- 4. Transgenerational Equity:** Does the program burden future generations?

Program effectiveness, through performance measurement, was a key theme of our 2018 to 2020 Strategic Plan. Our relentless focus in this area will continue through the next five years. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has spotlighted pitfalls of determining specific, quantitative performance goals over a long-term period. This plan will not repeat that practice. Rather we commit ourselves to annually creating and consistently monitoring performance on key performance indicators (KPIs). More information about our KPIs can be found in the Milestones and Measurement chapter (page 39).

## ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS PRIORITY:

- 1. Enhance our data analysis program**
- 2. Formalize and enhance our government and public relations program**
- 3. Continue to apply an equity lens to program development**
- 4. Develop and work toward annual programmatic goals**
- 5. Report out annually on key performance indicators**



## Connect with Communities

While former board members unanimously told us that Live Baltimore was founded to spotlight lesser-known neighborhoods, this view does not always align with public perception of our organization and its marketing efforts. In fact, the theme of not doing enough for under-recognized (and more distressed) neighborhoods emerged among other interviewed stakeholders.

Earned or not, this reputation threatens Live Baltimore's future success. It is clear we have failed to effectively shift perceptions of our organization, that were established over the past 20 years, to meet our current reality.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Live Baltimore's staff spent the final Friday of every month visiting with residents in their communities. This event served not only as professional development for staff members, it also fostered meaningful connections and created opportunities to spotlight positives (through photography, social media posts, blog posts, and our email newsletters) in otherwise struggling neighborhoods. The absence of this event has left a void during the pandemic that must be filled once the pandemic has ended.

Recognizing this need, and also prior to the pandemic, Live Baltimore had begun the process of reintroducing itself to communities through neighborhood meetings. Using the Planning Department's updated community association directory, we will prioritize participation in such meetings beginning immediately and continuing indefinitely. Formal presentations by Live Baltimore will include invitations for residents to join a recently reconstituted Neighborhood Ambassador program, with clear instruction on how to do so provided. Through these efforts, we will aim to double the number of currently active Neighborhood Ambassadors.

Outside of Trolley Tour events, communities are marketed through profiles on Live Baltimore's website, on social media, in housing-market-related press releases, in advertising campaigns, in newsletters, in education materials, and through direct customer service interactions. However, the high-profile nature of Trolley Tours leaves many residents believing they are the only opportunity offered. To better communicate and encourage participation in other promotional outlets, Live Baltimore will create a menu of opportunities to be distributed to community and neighborhood associations (along with Neighborhood Ambassador invitations).

Live Baltimore's customers are primarily City residents, as most homebuyers in Baltimore City are existing City renters. Resources for City residents are highlighted in LiveBaltimore.com's five-item main menu under the heading "Resident Resources" (in addition to resources for homebuyers). Still, some residents perceive our focus to be exclusively on newcomers to Baltimore. As with our marketing opportunities, Live Baltimore will create and distribute a clear menu of services available to existing residents. These services will include school resources, tax credit information, assistance in understanding ground rent and the ground rent redemption process, referrals to City services and services offered by partner organizations, connections to community groups, and, of course, assistance with the homebuying process.

To empower communities in their own marketing and promotion, Live Baltimore will again offer neighborhood marketing trainings to communities. These trainings were some of the first activities conducted by Live Baltimore in the late 1990s but were abandoned over the past twenty years. As part of these trainings, and in addition to them, we will share our detailed housing market data with communities to assist them in understanding their marketable benefits and their likely target audiences.

Resident involvement is, and always has been, central to our programming. For example, Trolley Tour events include tabling opportunities for neighborhood groups (whether those communities are featured on tours or not). Invitations to such events are broadly distributed. However, the difficulty of maintaining up-to-date contact information for communities (widely acknowledged by government officials) may have led some groups to be left out of our communications. We will recommit ourselves, again using the Planning Department's updated directory, to ensuring all neighborhoods are invited and encouraged to get involved in our programs.

Inclusivity is an important component of our annual fundraiser and civic pride event, Baltimore's Birthday Bash. Since 2018, we have ensured that ticket prices remained affordable (even as the party grew in size and offerings) by raising additional sponsorship dollars and by offering "buy one give one" tickets that sponsor free entry for community members. Despite our strategic priority of increasing revenues, we commit to leveraging this event to connect with communities by maintaining the event's accessibility to all Baltimoreans.

A priority of our 2018 to 2020 Strategic Plan was to "identify new board members that increase the organization's expertise and reflect the City's racial and geographic diversity." While meaningful progress was made toward this goal over the past three years, this work must continue. Going beyond our last plan's statement, over the next five years we will endeavor to attract board members who are deeply rooted in the communities most in need of our attention.

Finally, we will engage in the ongoing work of building and maintaining public trust by publishing information on the nature and impact of our work and by continuing to be transparent about who we serve, where we impact, and who we are.

## **ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS PRIORITY:**

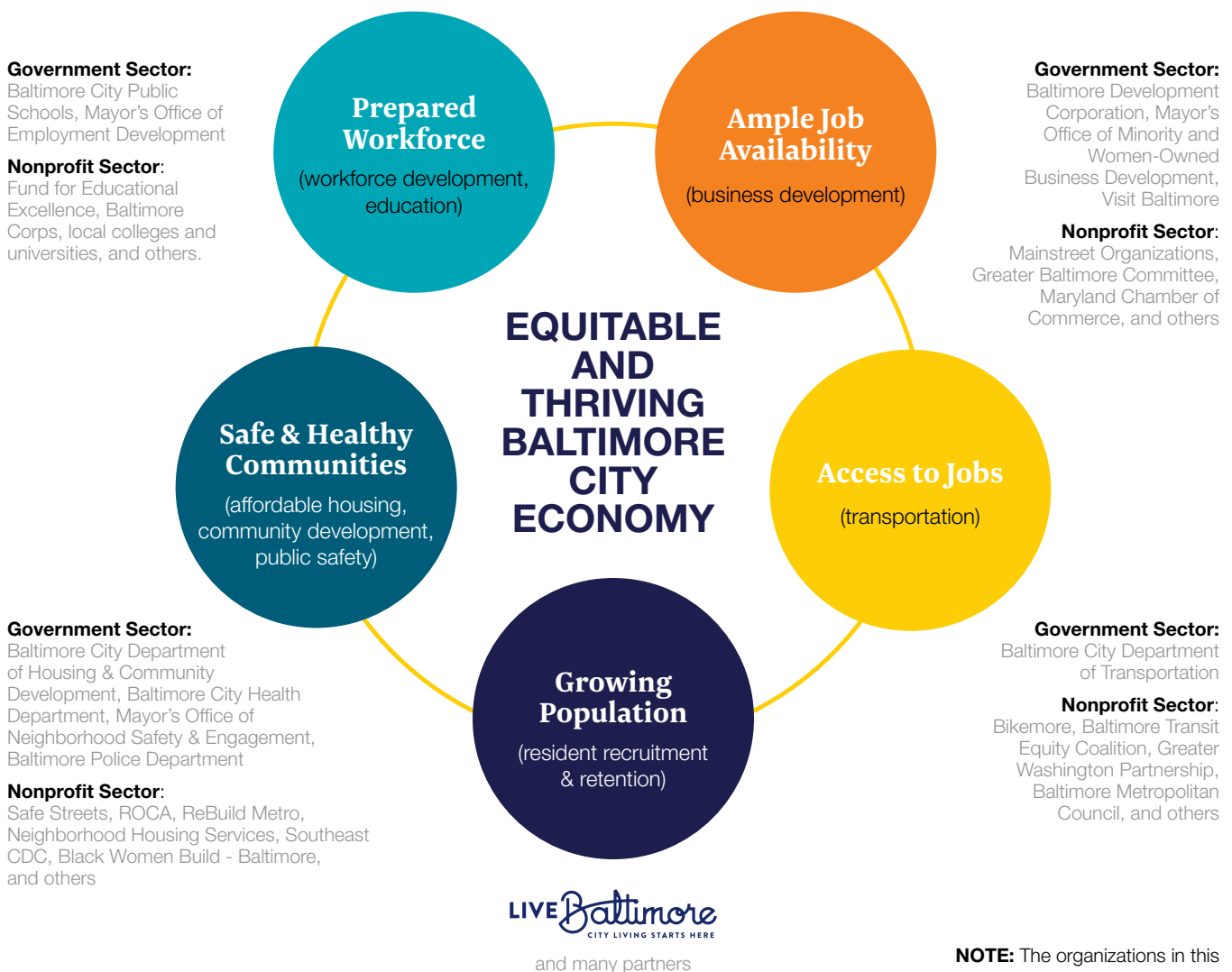
- 1. Reinstate Final Fridays following pandemic recovery**
- 2. Reengage neighborhood associations and solicit new neighborhood ambassadors**
- 3. Clearly publicize community marketing opportunities (beyond Trolley Tours)**
- 4. Clearly publicize assistance and support for existing residents**
- 5. Reinstate neighborhood marketing trainings**
- 6. Proactively and directly share housing market data with communities**
- 7. Continue to encourage resident involvement in all programs**
- 8. Regularly update neighborhood contact lists used for event invitations**
- 9. Maintain accessible civic pride (fundraising) events**
- 10. Continue to attract board members with deep roots in communities**
- 11. Continue to be transparent about who we serve, where we impact, and who we are**

## Nurture Partnerships & Alliances

In interviews, partners described Live Baltimore as a valued collaborator. One subject summarized others' sentiments, adding, "I'm not sure where I would send people if [Live Baltimore] didn't exist."

With an intended impact of growing Baltimore City's population, in order to create and sustain an equitable and thriving economy, Live Baltimore recognizes progress must be made in multiple areas. For example, those working in affordable housing, community development, workforce development, business development, education, transportation, public safety, and other spaces each contribute to our vision. We may partner with those working toward complementary outcomes, so long as to accomplish our population growth goals.

## Partners Working Toward an Equitable and Thriving Economy



Partners are critically important to Live Baltimore, especially at its current size, because they extend the reach of our work. As a recipient of public funds, community partners are also critical in ensuring that our efforts reflect the voice, perspectives, and desires of residents.

As Live Baltimore leans into leadership on the issue of population growth, and also as it seeks to become the recognized authority on Baltimore City's residential housing market, nurturing partnerships and alliances will be imperative. Not only will strong partnerships help to reduce competition and the duplication of efforts, they will ultimately help build momentum around shared causes more effectively.

Delineating the types of partnerships Live Baltimore maintains was vital to informing this plan. Common partner categories include thought partners, referral partners, promotional partners, collaborative partners, and business partners. (Fundors may fall into multiple categories.)

**Thought partners** are those organizations working on overlapping issues (such as community development corporations). These partners are engaged primarily through dialogue, such as brainstorming, problem solving, serving together on work groups, etc.

**Referral partners** are those organizations with whom there is either a one-sided or reciprocal system of referrals. For example, Live Baltimore makes referrals for service to Baltimore's many homeownership counseling agencies. These agencies reciprocally refer clients to Live Baltimore's events. Another example is Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS). Live Baltimore makes referrals to MVLS when we receive calls from residents whose properties are facing tax sale. MVLS is unlikely to make referrals to Live Baltimore, but they may do so on occasion.

**Promotional partners** are those partners, typically hosting events in Baltimore, for whom we promote events in exchange for the promotion of our own events.

**Collaborative partners** are those partners with which we are truly co-creating. Live Baltimore's staff members work with staff at these organizations to share the work of planning events, developing marketing materials, etc. Many government and anchor institution partners fall into this category.

**Business partners** are engaged in exchange relationships with Live Baltimore. Money typically changes hands in these interactions. These could be partners that Live Baltimore hires. They could also be partners who provide sponsorship of Live Baltimore's events in exchange for access to Live Baltimore's customers.

With limited capacity, it is essential to ensure that partnerships are beneficial to the organization—not draining of our resources or reputation. The introductory chapter of this plan details a series of criteria to be used, from an equity and social justice lens, to evaluate partnerships. Over the coming years, Live Baltimore's staff will work to further develop a decision tree for evaluating current partnerships and considering new partnerships. This rubric will likely include areas such as values alignment, partnership goals, Live Baltimore's needs, what Live Baltimore can and cannot offer, capacity considerations, and a defined series of benefits deemed worthy of engagement.

After creating and finalizing such a decision tree, Live Baltimore will conduct a thorough evaluation of partnerships to determine where there is need and room for expansion and where contractions should occur.

## ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS PRIORITY:

- 1. Develop a formal partnership evaluation tool and partner expectations agreement**
- 2. Evaluate existing partnerships against newly developed criteria**
- 3. End relationships and/or create new relationships based on evaluative findings**

## Be the Residential Market Authority

Engaged stakeholders repeatedly mentioned the value of Live Baltimore's research in their own work. It was clear from interviews and other feedback that our focus on data analysis since the adoption of our last strategic plan has fostered partnerships and increased Live Baltimore's importance to City government and other partners.

Our current data analysis program provides monthly reports on Baltimore City's multiple listed home sales by neighborhood statistical area and housing market typology group. On a quarterly and annual basis, we offer "State of the City Market" reports, designed in easy-to-digest, infographic formats. In recent years, the program has also expanded to engage research partners in critical, major initiatives (such as the Analysis of Baltimore City's Residential Market Potential, The Power of Residential Growth, and the citywide survey of homebuyers from 2016-2020).

Because our work is appreciated, Live Baltimore is increasingly asked to produce customized reports, of small geographies and neighborhood groupings, by community development corporations (CDCs) and government partners (such as Community Planners). We are eager to offer these reports, as providing concierge real estate data services to CDCs and other community-based organizations in Baltimore would advance shared community development goals and streamline messaging about the housing market. However, we currently struggle to do so with existing staff capacity.

To offer these enhanced services while regularly continuing efforts to complete major studies, track population trends, and monitor our own effectiveness, Live Baltimore must add a full-time data analyst. Governmental buy-in and assistance will be crucial to this outcome. Giving voice to the many partners who would benefit from enhancements to this program may also be important. Potentially, modest financial contributions (such as membership dues in exchange for enhanced data access) might also help to address staffing needs. Each of these avenues is worthy of pursuing.



With a full-time data analyst in place, Live Baltimore will be well positioned to solidify its standing as the residential market authority in Baltimore City. To lean into this role fully, we commit to continuing and expanding our data analyses efforts by:

1. Continuing to produce monthly data reports and quarterly and annual “State of the City Market” reports
2. Calculating the annual economic impact of City residents and their housing
3. Replicating 2020’s homebuyer survey bi-annually
4. Seeking funds to refresh the analysis of residential market potential every five years
5. Completing regular consumer studies, such as surveys and focus groups, to understand evolving perceptions of city living in Baltimore City
6. Partnering with the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development, the Baltimore City Department of Planning, Baltimore Development Corporation, and others to complete additional residential and consumer studies as appropriate

Importantly, strategic efforts in this priority area provide a necessary complement to other sections of the plan, including connecting with communities, nurturing partnerships and alliances, and advocating for population growth. As they prove the value of Live Baltimore’s own efforts, they also support scaling sustainably.

## ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS PRIORITY:

1. **Urgently seek funding for a full-time data analyst**
2. **Request letters of support for an expanding data program from partners**
3. **Evaluate partners’ interest and ability to share data program costs**
4. **Hire a consultant to construct an economic impact model that can be replicated annually and leveraged by Live Baltimore and other partners**
5. **Budget for future homebuyer surveys**
6. **Seek funding for large-scale research projects as appropriate**

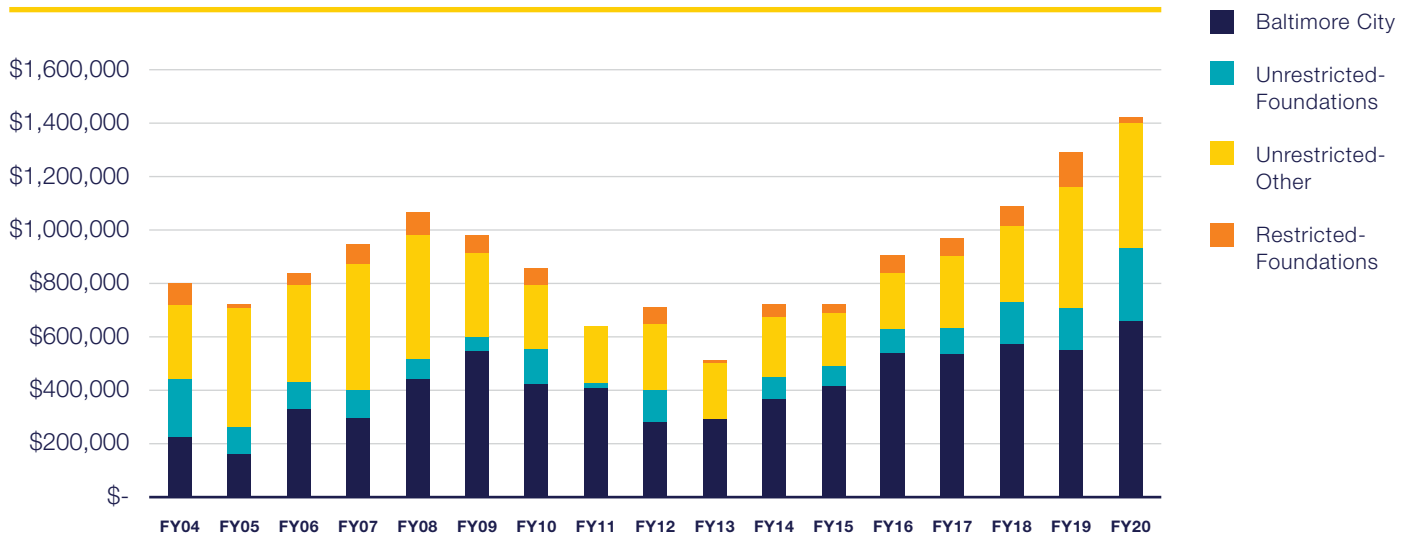
## Scale Sustainably

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, partners expressed a desire for Live Baltimore to have more resources. Live Baltimore was described as “punching above its weight for so long.” Other sentiments, such as “I would love for them to have more resources to market,” and “I would love more people to be supportive,” were also shared.

As an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Live Baltimore is funded through a variety of sources, including government, foundation, corporate, individual, and self-generating. Over the course of our history, our funding has fluctuated with the housing market, programmatic opportunities, and funder priorities.

As shown in the following graph, the past three years (the period covered by our most recent strategic plan) have been our most gainful to date.

### Live Baltimore Total Revenue by Restriction & Source



Funding the programs that make up Live Baltimore's core work requires efforts that are, in many cases, equal to the efforts needed to carry out the programs themselves. For this reason, it is important to consider these "revenue-generating programs" alongside the programmatic outputs that are externally associated with Live Baltimore.

### Funding Live Baltimore's Programs



With current resources, Live Baltimore can employ eight staff members. We work out of modest office accommodations, located on historic Charles Street, which have been our home for more than 18 years. After covering basic operating costs, maintaining operation of our website, and executing our Trolley Tours and other events, we are left with fewer than \$200,000 with which to market the entire City of Baltimore to residents each year. This is scarcely enough to maintain a local media presence.

Like the stakeholders that contributed to this plan, we know our current resources aren't enough to achieve our intended impact. While we are proud to operate on a lean budget, our funding is unarguably too little to fulfill the scope of our mission.

As one of the only dedicated residential marketing organizations in the United States, evaluating comparable organizations' budgets is not possible. In the field of city marketing, however, there are models to consider. Like residential marketing organizations, destination marketing organizations are responsible for promoting particular geographies to particular audiences for economic development purposes. A look at the budgets of these organizations, in other cities and our own, begin to suggest the amount of funding required to promote a city to residents.

### City Marketing Organizations: 2018 Revenues

<b>Conference and Visitors Bureau of Montgomery County MD Inc.</b>	<b>\$2,033,322</b>
<b>Tourism Council of Frederick County (MD)</b>	<b>\$2,979,182</b>
<b>Visit Annapolis &amp; Anne Arundel County Inc.</b>	<b>\$3,925,473</b>
<b>Greater Pittsburgh Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau Inc.</b>	<b>\$13,028,858</b>
<b>Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation</b>	<b>\$14,497,794</b>
<b>Visit Baltimore Inc.</b>	<b>\$16,017,787</b>
<b>Convention and Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland Inc.</b>	<b>\$17,827,942</b>
<b>Metropolitan Detroit Convention &amp; Visitor Bureau</b>	<b>\$19,892,198</b>
<b>Destination DC</b>	<b>\$24,668,365</b>

Funding at a level of greater parity with these organizations would allow Live Baltimore to be adequately staffed (for example, with a full-time data analyst, an executive-level communications director, a dedicated website manager, a Salesforce administrator to oversee customer data, and a shared office assistant). It would also allow us to produce more highly targeted neighborhood marketing materials and to share those materials through an appropriately sized paid media plan. We could expand our advertising's reach beyond the immediate Baltimore market (all we can currently afford) and into Washington D.C. and other competitive cities. We could also retain a public relations firm to place positive housing-related and neighborhood stories in local and national publications.

To examine areas of potential growth, Live Baltimore worked with Spectrum Nonprofit Services (first through the T. Rowe Price Foundation, later independently) to map the financial sustainability of our mission-based and revenue-generating programs. This process helped to identify which revenue streams, or business lines, were most profitable and impact-aligned. With this knowledge, we could better consider areas of reasonable expansion given current fundraising capacity and map out paths toward growth. In other words, for each existing revenue stream, we asked: Is it profitable? Does it impact our mission? Is there opportunity to grow within the stream? Do we have capacity to leverage the growth opportunity with existing resources? How can we leverage the growth opportunity with existing resources or modest additional investment?

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## Government Contracts

In our sustainability analysis, “government contracts” was found to be our most impactful business line. Given previously discussed funding levels of other city marketing organizations and findings like the following, this revenue stream was also determined to have untapped potential.

In a 2020 report by independent consultants, Econsult Solutions Inc., the value of Live Baltimore's work to City government was clearly quantified. This report states:

**The City's FY 2020 contribution [to Live Baltimore] was about \$585,000, which represents about half of Live Baltimore's annual operating budget. Recall that each new household generates the City \$4,800 in new tax revenues (and another \$6,400 more in new State tax revenues). Considering that Live Baltimore directly and indirectly influences many households that choose to move into the City, it is clear this is an effective use of City dollars.... To be more specific, giving Live Baltimore “credit” for 120 or so new households (out of the tens of thousands of households that it influences to move into the City every year) would yield City tax revenues in excess of the City's current annual financial contribution. (Page 29)**

With regard to current capacity, government relations efforts are already employed to maintain existing government funding. Additional government relations work is also planned for another strategic priority: Advocate for Population Growth. Taking these findings together, increased government funding should be pursued.



City marketing organizations that receive government funding are typically guaranteed support through earmarked tax revenue. Earmarks of this type require legislation. The following section, “Advocate for Population Growth,” describes in more detail how Live Baltimore will pursue growth in this revenue stream.

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## Business Partnerships

Business partnerships were also found to be among our most impactful business lines. In theory, business partnerships should always represent an area of potential expansion (as there are countless real estate businesses with whom we don’t currently partner). But in reality, business partnerships are limited by the benefits we can reasonably provide. For example, our ability to provide referrals to mortgage lenders—such that they see a return on their investment—is constrained by the number of customers with whom we interact. Given our current number of customers, several business partner categories have reached their maximum potential.

Other categories of business partners have not reached their cap of expansion, however. For example, we can continue to grow the number of apartment communities who sponsor our website content exponentially. We can also continue to grow the number of real estate support services, such as title companies, inspectors, movers, and other professionals that participate in our events.

Another potential area for growth, related to business partnerships, is membership contributions. As discussed in the strategic priority area “Be the Residential Market Authority,” partner organizations might be persuaded to support a full-time data analyst with membership contributions (which we would attribute this this revenue stream).

Our business partnerships business line is the only category of fundraising that already supports a dedicated staff position. Therefore, we will aim to continue the growth of this revenue stream by incentivizing progress through a newly constituted commission structure.

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## Grants

Like business partnerships (an equally sized revenue stream), foundation funding is critical to Live Baltimore’s operations. Despite this funding stream’s mission impact, we acknowledge that the number of foundations supporting community and economic development efforts is limited.

With this in mind, we will prioritize the quality of our relationships with existing funders over working to increase funder quantity (an exercise that may be futile). Our Executive Director will continue to serve as the primary point of contact in these relationships and no additional capacity will be needed.

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## Fundraising Events

The mission-based nature of Live Baltimore’s annual fundraising event (Baltimore’s Birthday Bash) makes it worth continuing, even with a lesser return. That said, this revenue stream has become increasingly important in recent years as it has grown exponentially. Maintaining this business line must be prioritized.

Continuing to cultivate corporate support will be essential to this revenue stream's success. The ongoing assistance of a fundraising consultant (already employed by Live Baltimore), as well as deep engagement among board members and their employers will be required for Baltimore's Birthday Bash to remain profitable. With this in mind, we will continue to recruit board members from sponsoring organizations and to share the work of nurturing sponsor relationships across our board and staff.

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## Individual & Corporate Gifts

Corporate and individual donors are important to our organization. These funders not only contribute revenue, but they are also a constituency of supporters. Community members and entities that are literally bought-in to our work can be leveraged to help advocate for Live Baltimore's value to funders in other categories. These relationships should, therefore, continue to be cultivated and nurtured for the dual bottom line of dollars and coalition building.

However, massive growth in this revenue stream would require an investment that amounts to a new line of business (likely requiring multiple dedicated staff). Given more pressing staffing needs, the time required to stand up a more robust charitable giving program, and the nature of our work, we have been advised not to prioritize these efforts. Rather, we will continue to modestly grow this area, mindful of existing capacity.

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## Program Revenue & Investments

While program revenue represents a small portion of Live Baltimore's funding, investments are an emerging area of opportunity. Aggressive fundraising and careful spending in fiscal years 2017-2020 have positioned Live Baltimore with an adequate (6-month) reserve fund for the first time. Managing this precious resource is now critical to our future sustainability. To cover long-term rising costs, such as cost of living increases for staff, rising healthcare premiums, and rent inflation, we will seek a financial advisor who can assist us in earning income from this nest egg. With direction and oversight from the Finance Committee, we will ensure reserve dollars remain flexibly available while also spinning off revenue through cautious investing.

## ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS PRIORITY:

1. **Continue to advocate for additional government funding**
2. **Grow business partnerships and explore opportunities for membership contributions**
3. **Continue to grow corporate and individual contributions using current resources**
4. **Prioritize existing foundation relationships while monitoring the environment for potential new connections**
5. **Continue civic-pride events with an eye toward mission and revenue**
6. **Identify a financial advisor and open an investment account for reserve funds**

## Advocate for Population Growth

Stakeholders unanimously recognize the essential nature of Live Baltimore's work. Many noted in interviews that the need to advance population growth is, perhaps, more pressing today than in the year of our founding. Interview subjects also described valuing Live Baltimore's close relationship with the City and, therefore, our ability to advocate in ways they often cannot. Some expressed that after 20 years of operation, leaning into policy work is a natural progression.

As noted by these stakeholders, and earlier in our foundational strategy, elected officials and their policies must support population growth if we are to succeed. At the same time, if we are to have the resources to succeed, government officials must fully understand the economic value of residents, the importance of population growth, and our programs' significant return on investment.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Live Baltimore has historically avoided policy and advocacy efforts. This position has stemmed from legal concerns, the nature of our relationship with City government, and limitations of our staff's experience and capacity. Advocacy by nonprofits is not prohibited, however. So long as we remain true to our charitable purpose, avoid engagement in elections, and spend less than 30% of our budget on lobbying, advocacy around population growth and our own funding is possible.

As stated previously, government relations efforts are already used to maintain existing government funding, with current staff capacity. However, Live Baltimore does not currently employ a policy analyst (making it difficult to determine whether legislation constitutes good or bad policy). It also does not have a law department to review the legality and implications of bills. Therefore, additional investment may be required to enhance this program. And, it should be noted, that with this approach, it is critical for current and future Live Baltimore leaders to be skilled in policy and government relations.

Live Baltimore will begin to engage in out-of-session advocacy efforts in order to highlight the costs of population loss and benefits of population gain. These efforts will not relate to specific pending legislation, rather the overall cause of population change. These efforts might include: producing white papers, releasing major research reports, gathering and sharing annual economic statistics, and coordinating with other organizations to host "Residents Matter Week" in Annapolis.

Live Baltimore will also engage legislative experts to help craft bills to support Live Baltimore financially. Lobbying efforts may be required, should Live Baltimore put forth its own bills (independently or jointly). However, at this time, the only such bills envisioned would relate to our own funding.

A danger of engaging in advocacy is that many issues can be connected to increasing population. It is therefore important to state clearly where we will and won't engage as an organization.

**Population Growth:** Live Baltimore will advocate for the importance of population growth broadly, at all times. This may include work to educate legislators on population issues and to gain their commitment to grow the city.

**Funding for Live Baltimore:** Advocating for population growth also means advocating for our own funding. Live Baltimore will actively seek new streams of government funding by alerting legislators to our currently inadequate funding levels and our significant return on investment.

**Housing Development:** Live Baltimore will inform legislators of the importance of housing development to population growth. This does not include advocating for individual developments or development incentives. For example, we might advocate generally for housing construction. The Maryland Building Industry Association might advocate for specific incentives to jumpstart construction. Live Baltimore will also advocate broadly for the importance of spreading housing development throughout more neighborhoods (outside of the waterfront). A CDC might then advocate for a TIF to catalyze development in their particular catchment area.

**Tangential Issues:** Advocacy groups regularly connect population effects to their causes. Advocates in favor of expanded mass transit, bike lanes, more affordable housing, stronger environmental protections, increased public safety, and other issues might all reasonably suggest their ideas will result in additional Baltimore City households. However, these groups often face opposing groups with similar claims. (For example, advocates for the Maglev and expanded high speed rail each point to potential residential growth but disagree with each other's proposals. Advocates for trails and bike lanes say they will improve home values, while valued neighborhood partners oppose alterations to their communities.) For these reasons and others, we will continue to avoid supporting or opposing any causes outside those previously approved. Support for any cause other than general population growth, funding for Live Baltimore (or specific population growth efforts), and general housing development, must be approved by a board vote.

**Pending Legislation:** Given our current staff capacity and lack of expertise in policy analysis, we will continue to avoid providing testimony on pending legislation. Exceptions to this rule include testimony on bills to fund Live Baltimore or to generally fund population growth initiatives.

## ACTION ITEMS FOR THIS PRIORITY:

1. **Maintain an expanded list of relevant government contacts**
2. **Plan potential events and initiatives to raise awareness about the economic impact of residents and the importance of population growth**
3. **Disseminate regular information to government contacts**
4. **Identify a consultant to analyze City and State budgets and to draft funding legislation for Live Baltimore**
5. **Lobby for the passage of such legislation as needed**





# MILESTONES & MEASUREMENT

**If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it's the importance of flexibility. Therefore, while we commit to keeping elements of the Foundational Strategy chapter constant for the next five years, the Strategic Priorities chapter is a living document. This section will be reviewed periodically, alongside our annual budget and associated workplans.**

The first meaningful inflection point for our priorities will come with the release of 2020 U.S. Census results for municipalities. Annual population estimates, through the release of American Community Survey data, will follow. Economic shifts, as the county continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing social change, as the nation continues to confront its history of racism, are also appropriate reasons to correct course. In a more positive sense, the completion of major housing development projects should give pause to this plan. Any change in political leadership or mayoral priorities should as well.

Continuous improvement is central to our values. We also believe efforts to establish and maintain public trust must accompany efforts to achieve equitable outcomes. To ensure we preserve trust among the communities we serve, Live Baltimore will measure overall customer experience, using Net Promoter Score, and satisfaction with our customer service, using CSAT.

Finally, equity and accountability go hand in hand. Live Baltimore will remain accountable to Baltimore City government, our many funders, our Board of Directors, and all residents of Baltimore City. Progress on this plan's goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) will be provided at least annually to the Board of Directors, Baltimore City government, funders, and the public.

## KPI Overview

### EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS

1. Is our advertising and programming delivered equitably?
2. Is our advertising and programming effective?
3. Is our customer service effective?
4. Do our results generate a return on investment?
5. Are our outcomes equitable?

### SUCCESS METRICS

1. Customer Demographics
2. Website Traffic (#)
3. Event Attendance (#)
4. Net Promoter Score (NPS)
5. Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT)
6. Influenced Home Purchases (#)
7. For-Sale Market Influence (%)
8. Economic Impact (\$)
9. Impact on Neighborhood Housing Markets (%)

Live Baltimore will continue to be transparent in our efforts and outcomes through the publishing of an annual report and a commitment to monitoring and publicizing who we serve, where we impact, and who we are (as a board and staff) on our website.

## Action Item Summary

Progress on the action items associated with each strategic priority will be constantly monitored. A summary of all action items in this plan is as follows.

### **PRIORITY 1: ENHANCE & MAINTAIN RESULTS-ORIENTED PROGRAMS**

1. Enhance our data analysis program (detailed later)
2. Formalize and enhance our government and public relations program (detailed later)
3. Continue to apply an equity lens to program development
4. Develop and work toward annual programmatic goals
5. Report out annually on key performance indicators

### **PRIORITY 2: CONNECT WITH COMMUNITIES**

1. Reinstate Final Fridays following pandemic recovery
2. Reengage neighborhood associations and solicit new neighborhood ambassadors
3. Clearly publicize community marketing opportunities (beyond Trolley Tours)
4. Clearly publicize assistance and support for existing residents
5. Reinstate neighborhood marketing trainings
6. Proactively and directly share housing market data with communities
7. Continue to encourage resident involvement in all programs
8. Regularly update neighborhood contact lists used for event invitations
9. Maintain accessible civic pride (fundraising) events
10. Continue to attract board members with deep roots in communities
11. Continue to be transparent about who we serve, where we impact, and who we are

### **PRIORITY 3: NURTURE PARTNERSHIPS & ALLIANCES**

1. Develop a formal partnership evaluation tool and partner expectations agreement
2. Evaluate existing partnerships against newly developed criteria
3. End relationships and/or create new relationships based on evaluative findings



**PRIORITY 4: BE THE RESIDENTIAL MARKET AUTHORITY**

1. Urgently seek funding for a full-time data analyst
2. Request letters of support for an expanding data program from partners
3. Evaluate partners' interest and ability to share data program costs
4. Hire a consultant to construct an economic impact model that can be replicated annually and leveraged by Live Baltimore and other partners
5. Budget for future homebuyer surveys
6. Seek funding for large-scale research projects as appropriate

**PRIORITY 5: SCALE SUSTAINABLY**

1. Continue to advocate for additional government funding
2. Grow business partnerships and explore opportunities for membership contributions
3. Continue to grow corporate and individual contributions using current resources
4. Prioritize existing foundation relationships while monitoring the environment for potential new connections
5. Continue civic-pride events with an eye toward mission and revenue
6. Identify a financial advisor and open an investment account for reserve funds

**PRIORITY 6: ADVOCATE FOR POPULATION GROWTH**

1. Maintain an expanded list of relevant government contacts
2. Plan potential events and initiatives to raise awareness about the economic impact of residents and the importance of population growth
3. Disseminate regular information to government contacts
4. Identify a consultant to analyze City and State budgets and to draft funding legislation for Live Baltimore
5. Lobby for the passage of such legislation as needed

Federal Hill Park









# CLOSING REMARKS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND SOURCES

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This strategic plan sets a course for Live Baltimore's success through 2026.  
To partner in our efforts, contact **Annie Milli, Executive Director, at [amilli@livebaltimore.com](mailto:amilli@livebaltimore.com).**



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