West Baltimore and Harlem Park Neighborhood Council
Six-month progress report
February 2015

Smart Growth America met with West Baltimore leaders on March 15, 2014 to discuss how the community can make the most of the proposed Red Line stations that will be coming to the area. Much of the workshop discussion specifically addressed how the neighborhoods could attract development to the new transit corridor and how to ensure that such development is equitable, serves the neighborhood’s current residents, and helps address the community’s broader needs.

On September 29, 2014 Smart Growth America delivered a one-month progress report to the community to summarize West Baltimore’s progress in addressing the issues and ideas raised at the workshop. The one-month progress report highlighted many ongoing initiatives between West Baltimore community groups and the City of Baltimore. The one-month report also indicated a need to improve communication and coordination, both between the community and the City and among individual City departments.

Since the one-month progress report, there is progress to report in and around the community, as well as ongoing challenges:

- Planning for the MARC Red Line has stalled because of political uncertainty facing the project. New Maryland Governor Larry Hogan is currently reviewing funding for the Red Line project. Many community members and city officials cited a “wait and see” approach in making any further decisions to attract new developments surrounding the proposed Red Line stations in West Baltimore.

- The Lafayette Square Association, the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council, and the Upton Planning Committee recently moved their offices into a renovated home on Lafayette Square, right in the heart of Harlem Park. Housing these organizations together is a big win for the community and is symbolic of the increased collaboration and communication that community leaders continue to push for.

- On October 25th a representative from the Baltimore City Department of Planning met with the Midtown Edmondson Improvement Association. The meeting gave community members the opportunity to learn about the status of many properties in and around Midtown-Edmondson.

- RCLCO is continuing to conduct a land use analysis to create a West Baltimore MARC Station Area Redevelopment Strategy. Among other things, the City indicates that the analysis will consider the possibility of building
new affordable housing in the area. City officials hope that the land use analysis will be completed within the next month.

- A representative from the Baltimore City Department of Planning attended a Harlem Park Neighborhood Council meeting in November to introduce themselves and answer any questions.

- City planners continue to address questions from community members regarding specific property concerns, municipal zoning notices, and requests for status of permits.

- The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) held a public meeting at Mount Royal Elementary School on October 29th to gain public input on preliminary alternatives, the evaluation process, and other public concerns regarding the Baltimore and Potomac (B&P) Tunnel Project in West Baltimore. The public meeting helped MDOT and FRA officials identify community concerns as they move forward to evaluate plans to either rehabilitate or relocate the B&P tunnel. MDOT and FRA summarized and released these community concerns in December in a Preliminary Alternatives Screening Report.

- Several ongoing City initiatives are targeting Harlem Park in their efforts. These include:
  - Baltimore Housing’s Vacants to Value program continues to sell city-owned property to be renovated into new housing.
  - The Adopt-a-Lot program continues to create maintained green spaces and community gardens in West
  - The Growing Green Initiative coordinator has been going identifying specific lots for potential greening strategies.
  - City officials toured three inner-block parks in Harlem Park with the Parks and People Foundation to discuss upcoming work they are doing, including landscape improvements, pavement removal, and grass seeding.

As the above progress and challenges indicate there has been progress in improving communication and coordination between West Baltimore community members and City of Baltimore officials. City officials have made a concerted effort to meet with community groups and community members have provided substantive feedback whenever possible. However, further progress can be made, as many residents remain uninformed of City initiatives in and around West Baltimore. By improving communication and coordination, ongoing city initiatives could reach a wider audience and have a greater impact on West Baltimore residents.