

REIMAGINE MIDDLE BRANCH

Parks, projects & programs to connect
communities in South Baltimore

The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan

Executive Summary

February 2023

The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan is led by the City of Baltimore, South Baltimore Gateway Partnership, and Parks & People, working alongside a team of expert consultants, local and regional stakeholders, and South Baltimore residents.



The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan was prepared by a collaborative team of consultants, including:

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** Changes to roads are conceptual, designed to inspire conversation. In practice these will require traffic studies to balance the needs of all users, including trucks.*

“This is about providing clean, accessible, and modern spaces that show our residents, particularly our young people, that they matter. That we care about them and are going to do everything in our power to give them the best quality-of-life possible.”

Mayor Brandon M. Scott

Acknowledgments

- City of Baltimore**
 - Brandon M. Scott, Mayor
 - Justin Williams, Deputy Mayor for Community & Economic Development
 - *Ethan Cohen, Senior Advisor for Community & Economic Development
 - Chris Ryer, Director, Department of Planning
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- South Baltimore Gateway Partnership**
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 - Chris Ryer and Ethan Cohen, Co-Chairs

- Steering Committee

 - Dr. Franklin Lance, Chair

- Community Advisory Committee

 - Michael Middleton and Jazmin Kimble, Co-Chairs

- JEDI Advisory Committee

 - Stephanie Smith (Baltimore City Department of Planning) and Kyle Leggs, Co-Chairs

- Public Planning Advisory Committee

 - Nicole A. Davis and Jill Lemke, Co-Chairs

- Science & Technical Advisory Committee

 - Eric Schott, Ph.D. (University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science / Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology) and Brad Rogers, Co-Chairs

- Planning Area Neighborhoods**
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 - Barre Circle
 - Brooklyn
 - Carroll-Camden
 - Cherry Hill
 - Curtis Bay
 - Federal Hill
 - Lakeland
 - Locust Point
 - Mount Winans
 - Otterbein
 - Pigtown
 - Ridgely’s Delight
 - Riverside
 - Saint Paul
 - Sharp-Leadenhall
 - Stadium Area
 - South Baltimore
 - Westport

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In addition, the **State of Maryland** has provided funds for this project through the Maryland Capital Grants Program, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development—Division of Neighborhood Revitalization.

The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan was adopted by the Baltimore City Planning Commission on February 9, 2023

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Executive Summary

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW

Reimagine Middle Branch is a community-driven initiative to reconnect South Baltimore with a system of world-class parks, trails, programs, and economic development plans along the 11-mile shoreline of the Middle Branch shoreline of the Patapsco River.

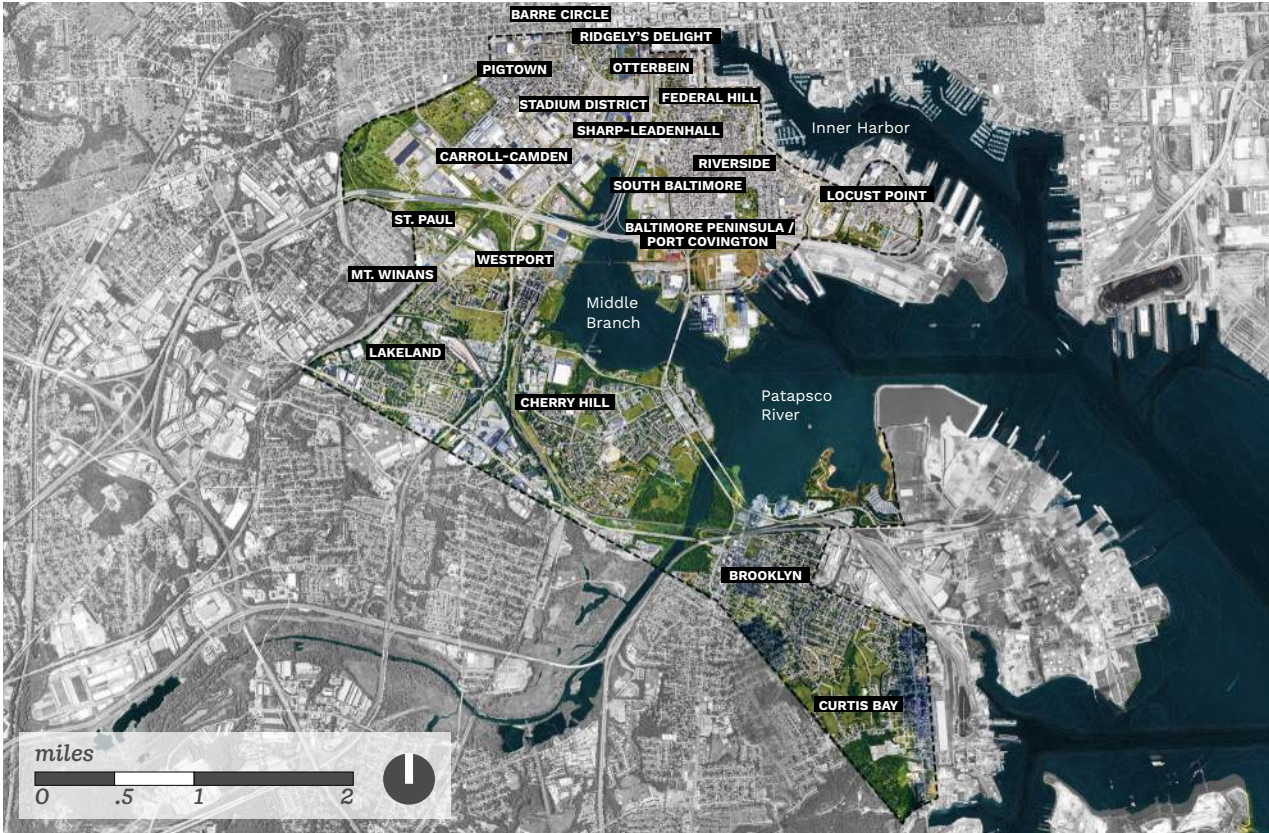
By holistically addressing issues of environment, health, and equity, Reimagine Middle Branch

strives to realize more than Baltimore's next great waterfront. This initiative is fundamentally about equity and justice, resilience, and health—a transformation of place supported by new connections, jobs, wealth-generation, and quality of life amenities that extend beyond the built environment.

The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan

The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan (the Plan) presents a powerful, long-term vision for a new “park-shed” which connects South Baltimore neighborhoods to one another and to the waterfront. As a watershed is a land area that channels rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams, and rivers, the park-shed is the territory within South Baltimore that channels people to the Middle Branch shoreline via a network of parks and public open spaces.

The Plan’s **study area** covers the bounded area and neighborhoods shown in the map at right within approximately 1.5 miles of the shoreline of the main basin known as the Middle Branch of the Patapsco. Technically, It also includes the Main Branch of the Patapsco, which separates Brooklyn from Cherry Hill and forms the border of Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties. The study area encompasses all neighborhoods in the City’s 2015 South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan, plus Brooklyn, Curtis Bay, and Locust Point. The intent is to include all neighborhoods from that earlier plan as well as these other neighborhoods that are connected to this unique part of Baltimore’s waterfront.



While the Plan outlines the physical transformation of the Middle Branch, it is also meant to catalyze the intangible transformation of the place—to one that is just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

To that end, the Plan paves the way for new physical uses on-site along with programming, partnerships, policies, job creation, and equitable economic development.

Plan Organization

The Plan is organized as four volumes, each with a specific emphasis and purpose:

- Volume 1: Design Vision
- Volume 2: Implementation Strategy
- Volume 3: Engagement Summary
- Volume 4: Resource Guides

Volume 1: Design Vision

This volume, the Design Vision, begins with four “Equity Frameworks” that situate Reimagine Middle Branch in South Baltimore and form the organizing principles for the Plan’s design proposals and strategies. “A Walk Around the Middle Branch” synthesizes these principles and applies them to locations around the shoreline and in the neighborhoods that surround it.

The frameworks presented in Chapters 2 through 5 are: Restore and Protect the Shoreline, Transform Barriers into Connections, Active and Inclusive Parks, and Equitable Development. These perspectives on the Middle Branch engage the entire study area and are described through diagrams, analyses, and strategies that address the

project’s goals. Within the frameworks, general principles are illustrated by design guidelines, specific projects, and recommended action steps. These visions for streets, trails, park structures, ecological restoration, and new developments will define the character and uses of the Middle Branch’s public spaces. They are coupled with equity-based initiatives that will connect residents to opportunities spurred by these improvements.

In Chapter 6, the Walk Around the Middle Branch comprehensively illustrates a new, integrated network of parks, trails, and facilities that wrap the shoreline and connect back into the neighborhoods. The Walk narrates and illustrates each sub-area with illustrative plans, bird’s-eye views, and renderings.

Volume 2: Implementation Strategy

Equally important to a strong design vision is technical feasibility and comprehensive intelligence of the Plan, as the vision needs to be buildable, implementable, and sustainable. The Implementation Strategy outlines recommendations on the following topics:

- A Funding Strategy that makes this ambitious vision credible
- A Phasing Strategy that organizes the work into manageable units
- A Permitting Strategy that provides a coherent approach to regulatory review
- A Management Strategy to ensure long-term organizational capacity for this effort

Volume 3: Engagement Summary

The Engagement Summary grounds the Plan as a community-driven initiative. It summarizes the engagement process as well as key feedback and input from the community and key stakeholders, which was gathered throughout an iterative and robust planning process.

Volume 4: Resource Guides

The Resource Guides, focused on equity, transportation, and funding, complete the four-volume Plan. They include detailed analyses, case studies, and precedents to further support the advancement of the design vision and Plan implementation.

Centering Equity

Communities in 19 South Baltimore neighborhoods live near or adjacent to one of the Chesapeake Bay’s most neglected shorelines and are often separated from the waterfront by transportation infrastructure or industrial land uses. Amplified by the challenges of climate change, COVID-19, and systemic racism, environmental injustices at the Middle Branch diminish quality of life, especially for its working-class and communities of color.

As the City of Baltimore and its many partners engage in a transformative process to reinvest in the health and vitality of the Middle Branch, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) are at the center of both the design and planning processes and are key to their successes. Building on principles from the City of Baltimore’s Equity in Planning Committee (EIPC) as well as best practices from other communities, the project’s sponsors and the Planning Team have evaluated the equity of the Plan through four lenses:

- **Procedural equity:** Are the planning and development processes transparent and collaborative?

- **Distributional equity:** Are the range and type of public amenities, services, and programs equitably distributed within neighborhoods and do they meet the needs of the community? Are projects mitigating against the negative impacts of gentrification?
- **Structural equity:** Are public spaces welcoming and connected without barriers or gates? Are the means of connection free and universally accessible?
- **Transgenerational equity:** Are projects addressing historic advantages and

Splash! event



disadvantages? For instance, are they supporting the physical, mental, and economic health of historically disenfranchised communities with a healthy environment and opportunities for recreation, education, employment, and entrepreneurship?

These measurable criteria help to address systemic inequities through planning and design and allow us to realize the full potential of public open spaces to achieve more equitable and resilient cities.

For the Reimagine Middle Branch Plan, the following actions and initiatives have been key:

- Building a consultant team with local and national justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) experts
- Asset and inequity mapping of the entire project area
- Working closely with the Reimagine Middle Branch Community Advisory Committee to gather feedback and share project information via established community leaders
- Direct outreach on site and within all 19 project area neighborhoods
- Iteratively reviewing and tracking progress with the Reimagine Middle Branch JEDI Committee

In addition to creating an equitable planning process, the Planning Team led a series of activities concurrently with the creation of the Plan to catalyze and promote equity including:

MSU Fellowship Program



- **Job and education programs** for local students of color, including a graduate fellowship program with Morgan State University’s School of Architecture and Planning and a paid internship program in environmental design and planning for South Baltimore high school students.
- **Community engagement events** that offered educational and recreational programming for nearby community residents, such as “Splash! A Community Waterfront Event” in August 2021.
- **A mobile project hub** that travels around South Baltimore neighborhoods to share

Mobile Project Hub



progress on the Plan, gather feedback, and meet community residents where they are.

- **A storytelling initiative** called “Voices of the Middle Branch” that exists on social media.

Reimagine Middle Branch puts forward these mutually reinforcing strategies within an overall vision aimed at building equitable connections, diverse relationships, a more just environment, and inclusive communities, even before the physical transformation of the place begins.

Where Baltimore Meets the Bay

The Middle Branch of the Patapsco River is part of the Chesapeake Bay estuary, which is defined as a network of water bodies were saltwater from the ocean mixes with freshwater from rivers and streams to create a diverse range of habitats and support a wide web of different types of animal and plant species. The Chesapeake is actually the largest of more than 100 estuaries in the United States. It is known for the beauty and natural resources of its waterways, shorelines, and islands that make up its vast reach, and for the immense biodiversity they serve.

And yet, the Chesapeake is also an important thoroughfare for industry and commerce, as the Port of Baltimore is served by a shipping channel 50 feet deep and averaging 800 to 1000 feet wide, extending from the Virginia Capes to Fort McHenry.

The Middle Branch is the place where the intersection of industry and ecology is most evident and within close reach of tens of thousands of city residents. Unlike Baltimore’s Inner Harbor or the working waterfront of our port facilities, many sections of the Middle Branch’s once-industrialized shoreline have returned to a form of nature. This has

occurred either by neglect – as industry left, dredging of the channel west of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge ceased, and the basin silted in – or by intention through visionary projects like Middle Branch Park and Masonville Cove, the nation’s first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership.

Reimagine Middle Branch offers the opportunity to take advantage of this unique environment and achieve multiple goals: improving the water quality of the Patapsco and the Bay, restoring local habitat and environmental health for biodiversity within the Middle Branch, securing South Baltimore’s resilience in the face of climate change and increasing natural disasters, and bringing the beauty and health-benefits of a restored ecology to within reach of South Baltimore’s communities. And all this can be done while creating jobs and supporting the Port economy.

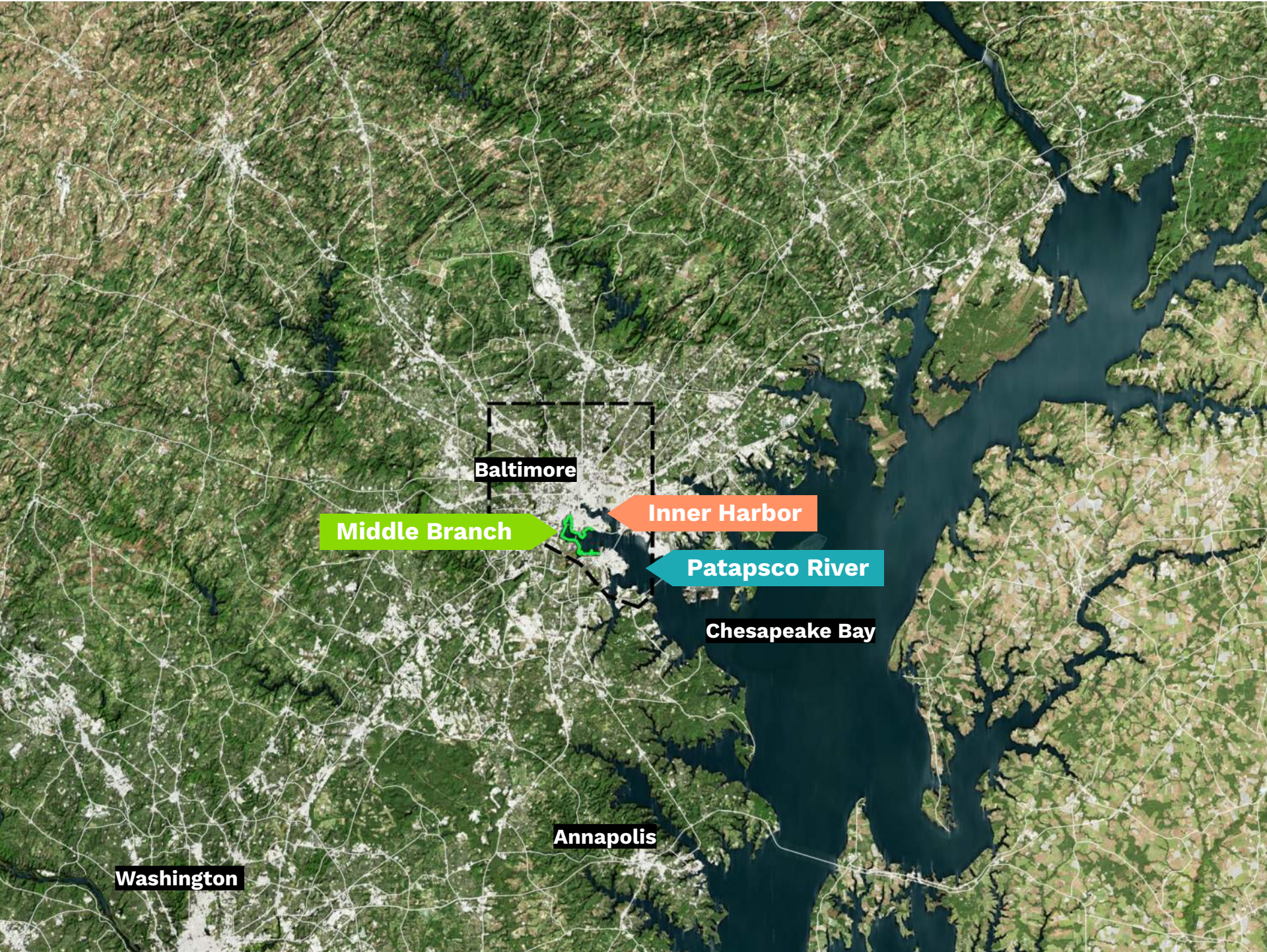
The Inner Harbor



The Port of Baltimore



Chesapeake Bay Estuary



South Baltimore and The Middle Branch

Within the Reimagine Middle Branch study area are 19 neighborhoods, over 30 parks and open spaces, and more than 11 miles of shoreline.

Reimagine Middle Branch extends from Curtis Bay and Brooklyn in the south to Cherry Hill, Lakeland, Westport, Mount Winans, and St. Paul west of the water; north to Carroll-Camden, Pigtown, Barre Circle, Ridgely’s Delight, and the Stadium Area/Casino Entertainment District; and east to Sharp-Leadenhall, Federal Hill, Otterbein, Riverside, South Baltimore, Locust Point, and Baltimore Peninsula (Port Covington).

The 19 neighborhoods are diverse in their residents’ backgrounds and income levels, as well as in their housing stock – which varies in type (rowhouses, single-family, apartments), tenure (rental, owner-occupied, public housing), age, physical condition, and property values. South Baltimore is also diverse in its land uses. Neighborhoods historically developed alongside industrial areas, as the Middle Branch, the harbor, and port-related commerce were the engines of economic growth for Baltimore and the region.

The 30 parks and open spaces in South Baltimore consists of nearly 600 acres. These spaces vary widely from more “citywide” destinations like Carroll Park and Federal Hill Park, to larger neighborhood parks such as Riverside Park and Lakeland Park, to small pocket parks and playgrounds – to accessible green spaces like Masonville Cove and West Covington Park that are not technically public parks. Nonetheless, many neighborhoods lack significant open spaces or recreation at their core. Brooklyn and Cherry Hill have waterfront parks along their edges, but these spaces have lacked in facilities, and high-speed roads make them difficult to access.

The 11 miles of shoreline within the study area extend from Baltimore Peninsula to Ridgely’s Cove, to the Gwynns Falls and the main stem of the Patapsco, and to Masonville Cove – essentially from commercial port facilities at the Maryland Cruise Terminal and Locust Point Marine Terminals on the northeast to the Masonville and Fairfield Marine Terminals on the southeast. Conditions along the shore vary greatly, as do opportunities for nearby residents or the public in general to reach the water.

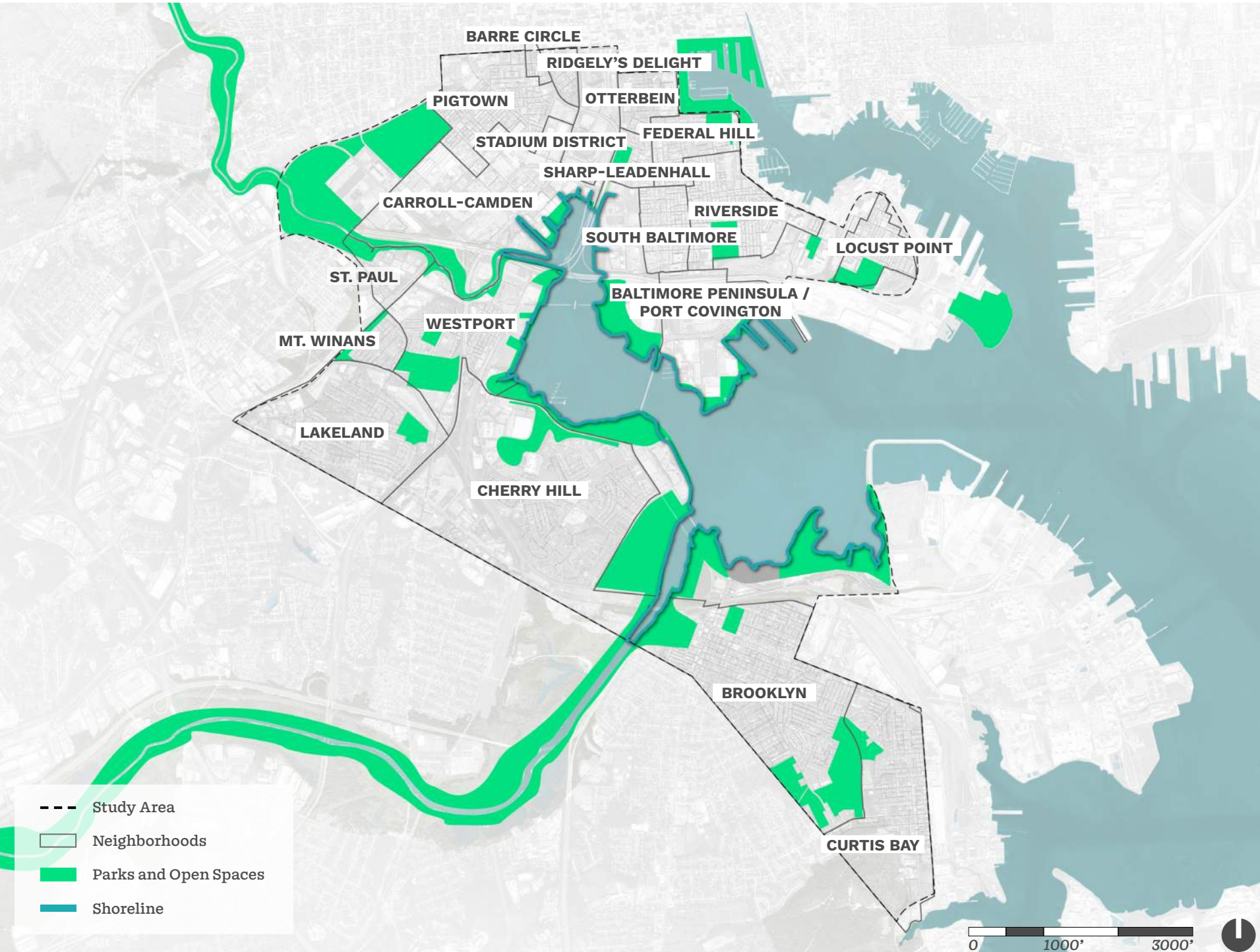
19 neighborhoods



Over 30 parks and open spaces



More than 11 miles of shoreline



Four Equity Frameworks

The transformation of the Middle Branch is organized into four equity-driven frameworks:

- 1. **Restore and Protect the Shoreline**
- 2. **Transform Barriers into Connections**
- 3. **Activated and Inclusive Parks**
- 4. **Equitable Development**

These frameworks translate community input into place-based transformations and people-oriented strategies that reflect the Plan’s goals. Varying in scale and scope, these actions address historic challenges. They build on previous plans yet capture the momentum of projects currently underway.

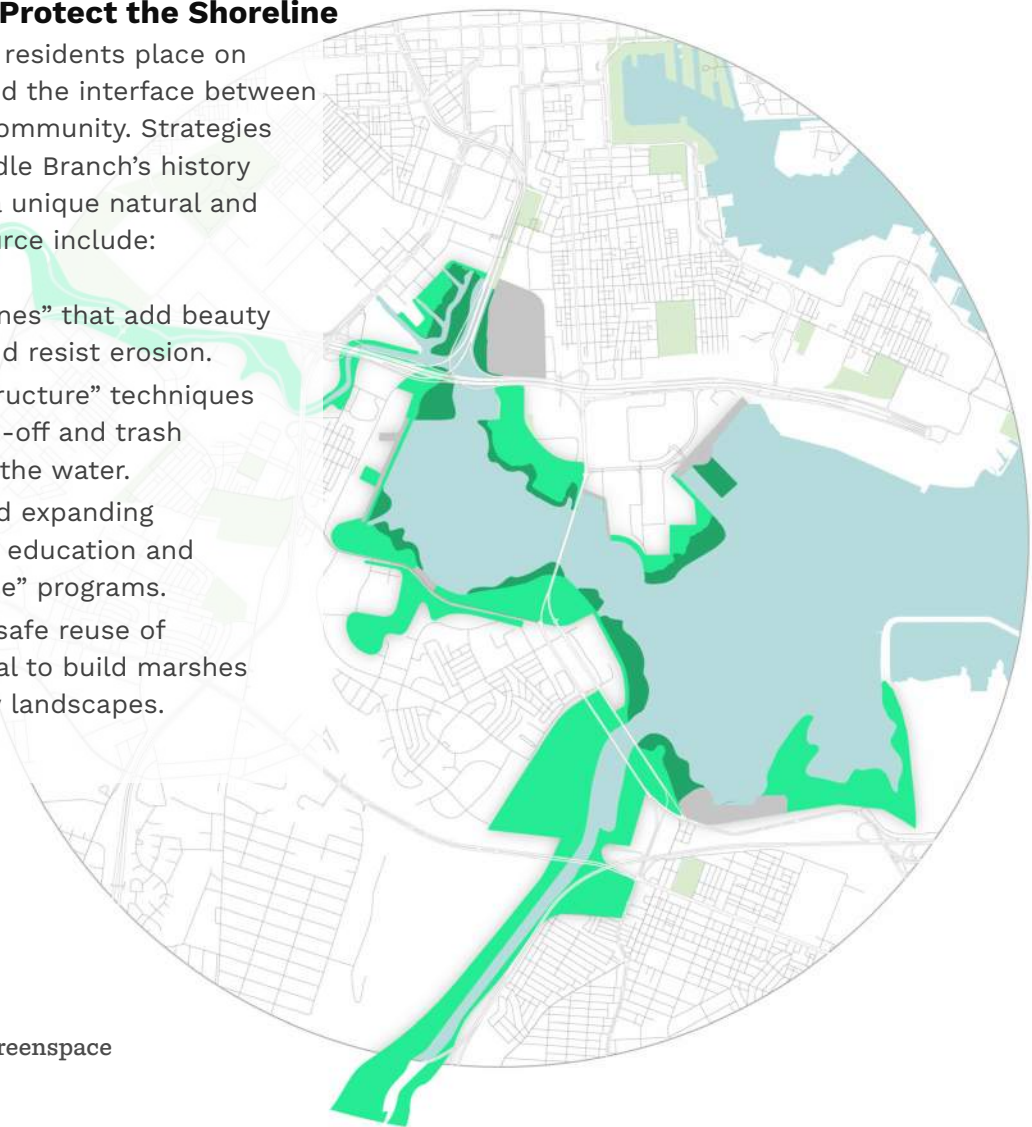
The frameworks serve as guides for finding “co-benefits” among strategies and for leveraging opportunities with like-minded partners. They will inform the implementation of innovative solutions to place-making and community-building around the Middle Branch, along with tactics for funding long-term stewardship and ongoing operations.

1. Restore and Protect the Shoreline

reflects the value residents place on views, ecology, and the interface between land, water and community. Strategies rooted in the Middle Branch’s history and potential as a unique natural and recreational resource include:

- “Living shorelines” that add beauty and habitat and resist erosion.
- “Green infrastructure” techniques that divert run-off and trash from entering the water.
- Supporting and expanding environmental education and “citizen science” programs.
- Incorporating safe reuse of dredge material to build marshes and other new landscapes.

- Wetlands
- Waterfront Greenspace



2. Transform Barriers into Connections

advances the priority for “increased connectivity” where highways, railroads and arterials separate communities from one another and block access to water. Strategies that address this goal while balancing the need for efficient movement of vehicles for port-based businesses and other industries include:

- A Shoreline Trail with a central 3-mile “Loop Trail” around the water.
- A new East-West Pedestrian Bridge between Westport and Baltimore Peninsula.
- Complete Streets corridors that connect neighborhoods and parks to the water, transit, and goods and services.
- Improving truck freight routes from Frankfurst Ave. to Route 2 and I-95.

- Proposed Trail Network
- Proposed Regional Trails
- Existing Trails
- Complete Streets






Four Equity Frameworks

3. Activated and Inclusive Parks

envisions a “park-shed” of high-quality, well-maintained facilities in neighborhoods, connected via safe, inviting pathways to a network of waterfront parks, trails and overlooks around the Middle Branch. Strategies that address this goal while creating equitable access and programming that reflects input from local communities include:

- Coordinating capital projects and programming across the park-shed.
- Linking shoreline parks and open spaces, and creating connections to neighborhood parks.
- Creating waterfront anchors that draw diverse uses and support operating costs.
- Expanding canoe/kayak and rowing programs with new boat houses, piers and landings.




-  Park Programming
-  Water Access
-  Waterfront Parks

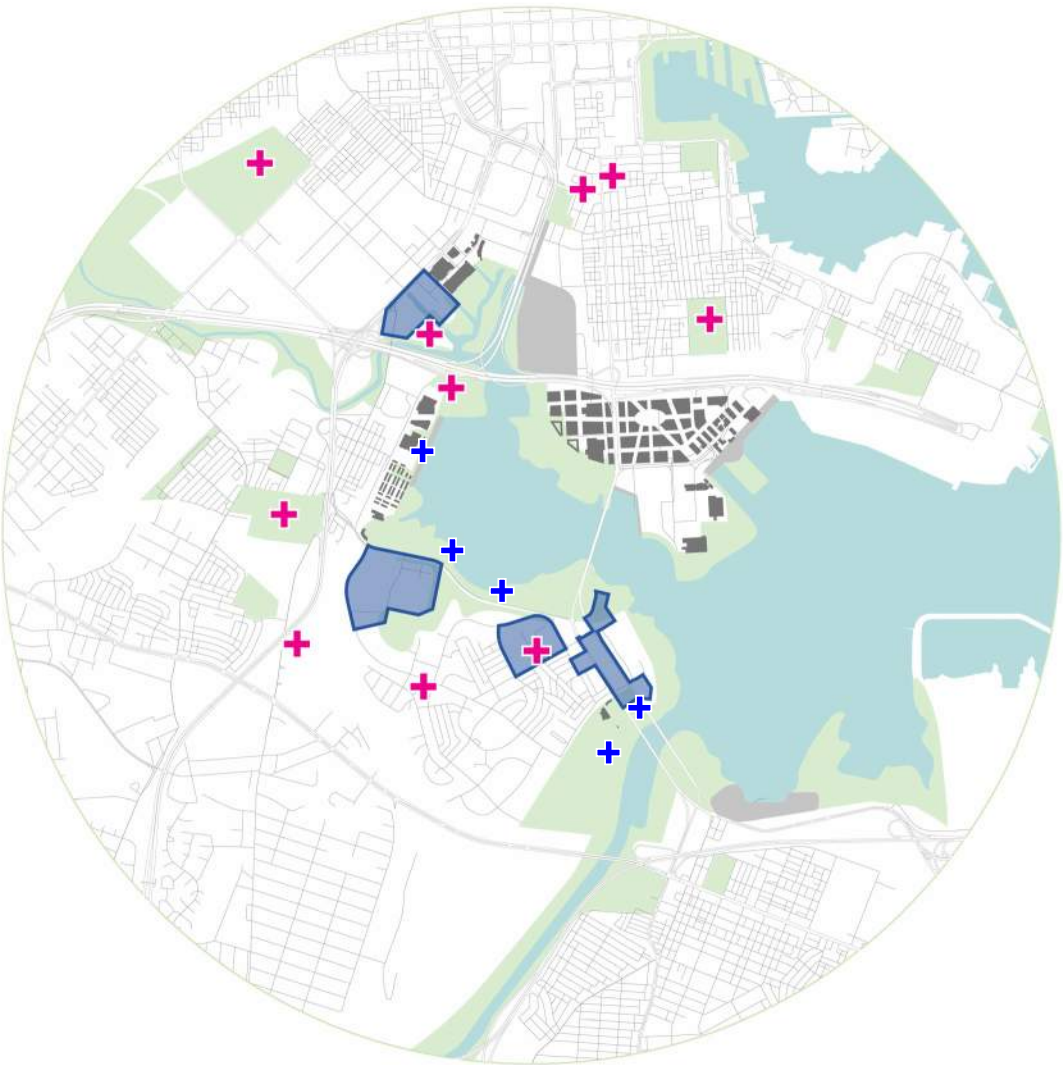


4. Equitable Development

is the framework for ensuring that current residents and future generations of South Baltimore participate in and benefit from “reimagining,” restoring and revitalizing the Middle Branch. Strategies that leverage this vision to support the growth of existing communities include:

- Sustaining and expanding investments in youth, workforce development, small businesses, and CDC capacity-building.
- Assembling capital for equitable investment in housing and mixed-use development.
- Establishing an African American Heritage District rooted in historical commemoration AND current cultural expression.
- Support for “green” social venture enterprises and new business start-ups.

-  Heritage District Sites
-  Development Projects
-  Opportunity for Development
-  Private Development



A Community-Driven Plan

The community engagement timeline tracks all engagement activities performed by the Planning Team throughout the duration of the RMB Plan. In addition to regularly seeking guidance and input from city agencies and city leadership, the Planning Team engaged stakeholders and the public in meaningful, action-oriented engagement, including:

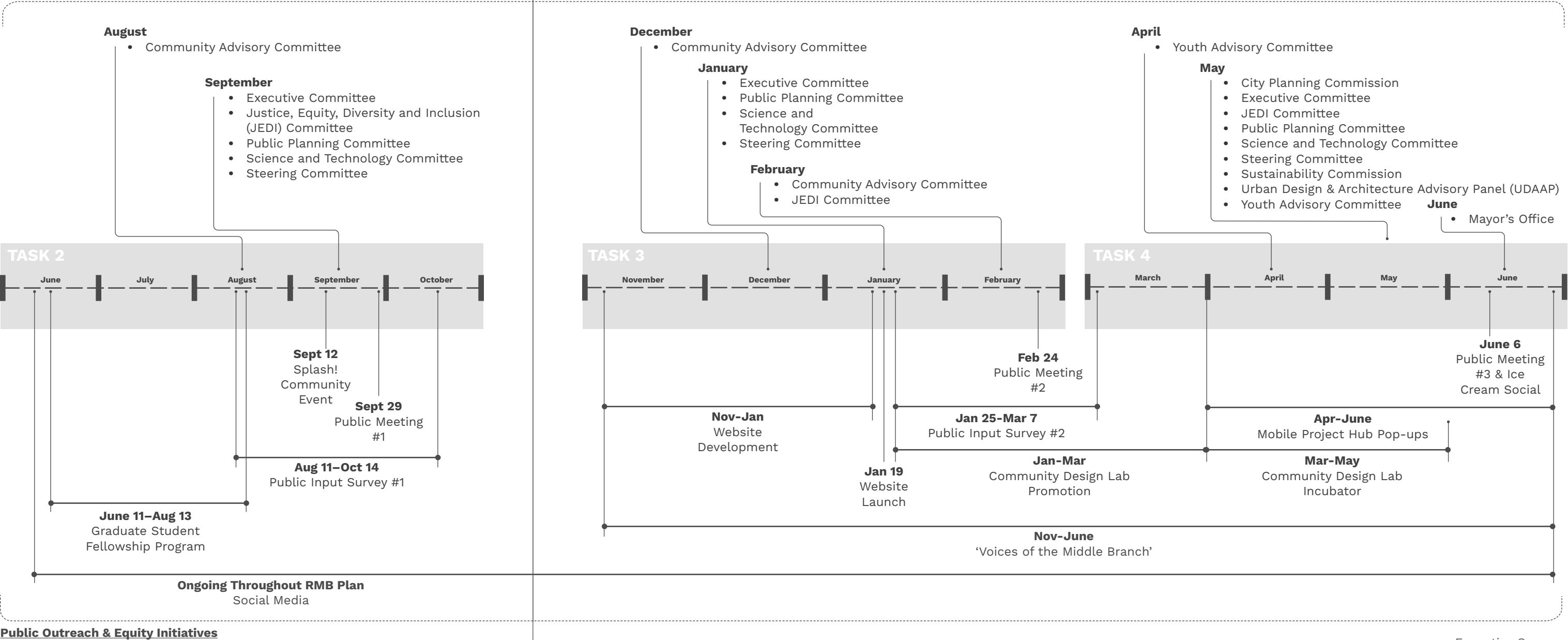
- RMB Advisory Committee workshops
- Presentations to City Commissions and City Leadership
- Public Outreach (Public Meetings, Surveys, Social Media, and a Project Website)
- Equity Initiatives

Engagement was iterative and structured around the following themes to best inform the Plan at each stage of development.

- Task 2: Evaluate** *June–October, 2021*
Initial outreach and engagement focused on evaluating existing conditions, generating initial design ideas, and defining priorities for future activity and use.
- Task 3: Validate** *October, 2021–February, 2022*
Continued outreach and engagement validated design direction and revealed key aspects of the Plan which needed additional attention.
- Task 4: Demonstrate** *March–June, 2022*
Continued outreach and engagement demonstrated how input had informed the Plan

In addition to these activities, members of the RMB Client team met with neighborhood associations and other community organizations in all neighborhoods in the RMB Plan study area.

RMB Committees, City Commissions & City Leadership



Implementation is Underway

What is remarkable about the RMB initiative is that many key elements of the Plan are already underway. The fact is that Reimagine Middle Branch is happening.

More than \$165 million in federal, state, and city funding, casino local impact grant (LIG) funds, and foundation funding has been raised for first- and second- generation public space projects that are now in progress or completed. These include:

- Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center (opened fall 2022)
- BGE Field at Reedbird Park (opened fall 2021)
- Gwynns Falls Trash Wheel (diverting trash from the Middle Branch since 2021)
- The first 25 acres of restored wetlands as Phase 1 of the Middle Branch Resiliency Initiative
- Ridgely’s Cove brownfield mitigation project and shoreline trail
- Planned donation of a new, public waterfront park and trail in the ONE Westport development

- Warner and Stockholm Street streetscaping and extension of the Gwynns Falls Trail
- New public parks planned as part of the Baltimore Peninsula development
- Renovation of the long-vacant Carroll Park Recreation Center
- Major capital improvements to Solo Gibbs Park and Florence Cummins Park
- Designs for the Baybrook Connector and MPA’s Proposed Masonville Cove Connector in Brooklyn.

This includes millions of dollars in casino LIG funds that have been invested as operating support for parks and community and economic development efforts, such as:

- Enhanced maintenance, trash pickup, tree planting and pruning, and public art in parks
- Supporting Main Street commercial corridors
- Recreational, cultural, and educational programming like the South Baltimore Gateway Sports Network and the Cherry Hill Arts and Music Waterfront Festival

- Operating support and program-based funds for community development corporations (CDC’s)
- Competitive grant programs and technical assistance for community-based organizations.
- Workforce development programs and summer youth jobs dedicated for South Baltimore residents and businesses.

On top of this work, **hundreds of millions of dollars in private investment are now taking place** in South Baltimore along its Main Streets, and at major development projects like Baltimore Peninsula, the Warner Street Entertainment District, and the ONE Westport waterfront development. The Baltimore Peninsula redevelopment project brings a pledge of over \$19 million for community investments to be managed by the SB7 Coalition, facilitated through a community benefits agreement and memorandum of understanding with community leaders.

The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan is expansive because it rests on a foundation of audacious and unprecedented success. The task now is to build the funding streams,

action plans, and organizational structures needed to sustain that success in the coming years. The four main interrelated elements of this Implementation Strategy – Funding Strategy, Phasing Strategy, Permitting Strategy, and Management and Stewardship Strategy – are intended to guide the community and RMB leadership in this effort.

Reimagine Middle Branch is not a single project or plan, but a collaborative, cooperative model of mutual support among a wide range of projects and initiatives under a coordinated vision. The breadth of this vision has several important implications for the success of the overall effort and individual projects and milestones that can benefit from the overall momentum:

- **Division of Labor / Distributed Staffing** – The staffing burden for this work is spread over multiple organizations so that the partner organizations in the RMB initiative do not carry the burden alone.
- **Distributed Fundraising** – The fundraising burden is also spread out, with different partners seeking funding from different

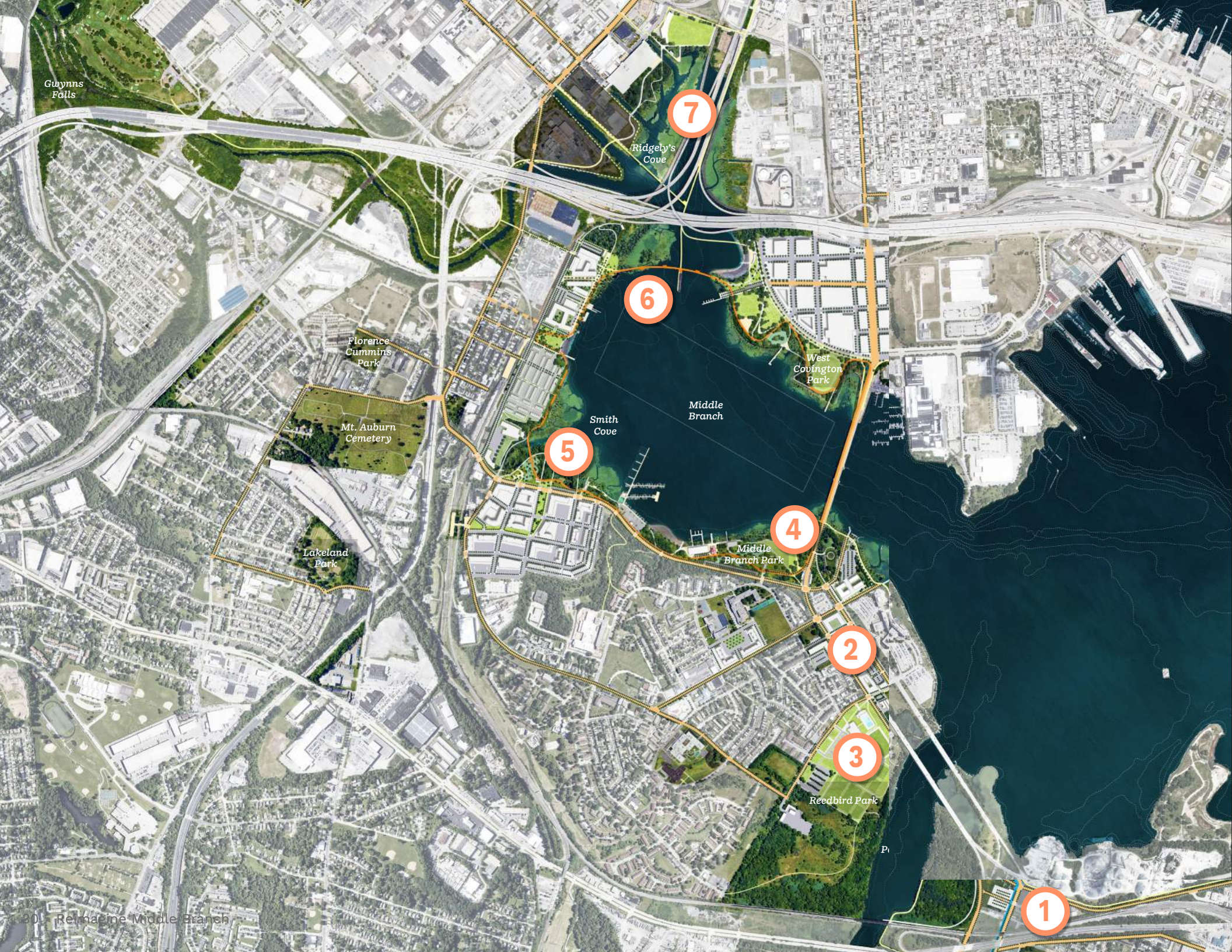
sources while being able to demonstrate synergy and leverage with related projects and programs.

- **Collaborative Acceleration** – By working together, partners are able to access and leverage funding from different sources and at different times over the life of a project. Casino local impact grant (LIG) funds offer great flexibility because their use is relatively unrestricted, and they accrue annually. South Baltimore Gateway Partnership (SBGP) brings capacity and focus, as well as flexibility, in deploying casino LIG funds when they are most needed.
- **Public/Private Partnership** – Public agencies have unique access to a certain suite of funding opportunities, such as federal grant programs designated for local governments; nonprofit partners can access other sources, such as foundation grants limited to non-profit organizations; and private sector developers or firms have access to sources of capital sources unavailable to governments and non-profits. This Plan maximizes the opportunity to harness the power and

potential that each type of entity can bring to this vision.

As an example, for more than a decade, the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks (BCFP) had planned to develop the **Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center** in Cherry Hill. A partnership between **BCRP** (with access to City and State funds), **SBGP** (with access to casino LIG funds), and the **Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation** (with its fundraising capacity) helped make the project a reality. The City’s external partners were able to fill a critical funding gap, allowing the project to expand in size and be brought to completion.

The work done to date or currently in the pipeline adds up to over \$165 million. More than the sum of the funds raised, this represents an initiative with an unexpectedly broad capacity to sustain momentum and harness outside funding sources beyond the City’s resources or any one organization’s budget capacity.



A WALK AROUND THE MIDDLE BRANCH

The four equity frameworks come together to create the long-term design vision that integrates new investments in parks, programs, transportation networks, and future development with existing assets and ongoing development projects being led by others. This unified vision is illustrated in a “walk around” the Middle Branch, detailing these plans neighborhood by neighborhood.

The maps on the following pages highlight developments in each sub-area that are Reimagine Middle Branch or “RMB” Projects being led by the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership and the City along with myriad partners; “Stakeholder Projects” being led by

other organizations and property owners; and “Existing Assets” being leveraged to create new synergies.

Beginning along the southern shore, the walk moves north, highlighting the following areas:

1. Brooklyn and Curtis Bay
2. Reedbird Park and Cherry Hill Homes
3. Hanover-Potee Corridor
4. Middle Branch Park
5. Middle Branch Marina and Smith Cove
6. Westport, Baltimore Peninsula, and East-West Pedestrian Bridge
7. Ridgely's Cove



Brooklyn and Curtis Bay

Where Industry Meets Nature

The walk begins in Brooklyn and Curtis Bay, where roads and infrastructure serving the Port of Baltimore and related industries dominate the landscape, and access to the water and to the rest of South Baltimore is limited. The vision for the Brooklyn Waterfront centers on restoring the shoreline and improving access for residents, while maintaining freight access for Port facilities to the east.

The restoration of the Middle Branch’s green shoreline began over a decade ago at **Masonville Cove**, an environmental education center and the nation’s first **Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership**. In 2007, the **Maryland Port Administration (MPA)** oversaw restoration of this area, which now serves as a model for strategic partnerships, environmental stewardship, and community-centered programming. Today Masonville Cove is a valued community and environmental asset. While the Plan seeks to connect Masonville Cove to the larger network of open spaces, this facility will continue to be managed by its unique operating partnership.

West of Masonville Cove, the Patapsco Marsh project is underway to construct new wetlands and living shorelines at the mouth of the Patapsco River (South Branch)-- part of Phase 1 of the Middle Branch Resiliency Initiative (MBRI). The proposed trail network connects Masonville Cove to the Patapsco Marsh and extends to Reedbird Island, a natural area that is inaccessible today. Similar in character to Masonville Cove, these parks constitute a significant natural and recreational resource with several miles of trails and multiple water access points.

RMB Projects

Stakeholder Projects

Existing Assets

1

Hanover-Potee Corridor Improvements

2

Patapsco Marsh (MBRI Phase 1)

3

Reedbird Island Boat Launch & Woodland Trail

4

Brooklyn Transit Hub at MTA Park & Ride

5

Brooklyn “Main Street” Initiative

6

Garrett Park Improvements

7

MPA’s Proposed Masonville Cove Connector

8

Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center

9

Patapsco Avenue Streetscape Project

10

Farring-Baybrook Recreation Center

11

William J. Myers Pavilion

Neighborhood Connectors

Complete Street

Baybrook Connector



RMB Projects

Stakeholder Projects

Existing Assets

1

Hanover-Potee Corridor Improvements

2

Patapsco Marsh (MBRI Phase 1)

3

Reedbird Island Boat Launch & Woodland Trail

4

Brooklyn Transit Hub at MTA Park & Ride

5

Brooklyn “Main Street” Initiative

6

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MPA’s Proposed Masonville Cove Connector

8

Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center

9

Patapsco Avenue Streetscape Project

10

Farring-Baybrook Recreation Center

11

William J. Myers Pavilion

Neighborhood Connectors

Complete Street

Baybrook Connector

* Changes to roads are conceptual, designed to inspire conversation. In practice these will require traffic studies to balance the needs of all users, including trucks.

Farring-Baybrook Park south in Curtis Bay

Brooklyn and Curtis Bay

New multi-modal lanes on the “Little Hanover Street Bridge” represent the completion of the Baybrook Connector Trail. This project, sponsored by the Greater Baybrook Alliance and MedStar Harbor Hospital, creates a protected route following the East Coast Greenway from the BWI Trail in Anne Arundel County, through Brooklyn, to Reedbird Park and the Middle Branch Shoreline Trail in Cherry Hill.

A transformed intersection at Frankfurst Avenue and the Route 2 corridor will facilitate a southbound turn onto Potee Street, enabling freight-truck traffic that supports industrial uses and the Masonville and Fairfield port facilities to reach I-95 via Patapsco Avenue and South Caton Avenue (Exit 50).

Complete Streets treatments on Hanover Street, East Patapsco Avenue, West Bay Avenue, Virginia Avenue / 6th Street, Church Street, and Pennington Avenue create safe and welcoming routes to the waterfront and within neighborhoods.

These corridors connect the trails and restored habitat areas of Brooklyn’s waterfront to its “Main Streets,” Garrett Park, and Brooklyn Homes, as well as to Farring-Baybrook Park and Rec Center, William J. Myers Pavilion, Bay Brook Elementary/Middle School and Benjamin Franklin HS in Curtis Bay.

Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership



Hanover-Potee Corridor looking south towards Brooklyn & Curtis Bay



** Changes to roads are conceptual, designed to inspire conversation. In practice these will require traffic studies to balance the needs of all users, including trucks.*

Reedbird Park and Cherry Hill Homes

Middle Branch’s Destination for Sports & Recreation

At the water’s edge, a trail fronts another wetland area constructed in Phase 1 of the Middle Branch Resiliency Initiative (MBRI), extending from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge to the Patapsco River (South Branch). This marsh will provide critical flood protection to MedStar Harbor Hospital and adjacent roadways. The trail connects Middle Branch Park to the newly completed Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center (2022) and is envisioned to connect to the Patapsco Regional Greenway and Southwest Area Park in Baltimore County.

This zone is proposed for two place-based equitable development projects: a **Native Plant Nursery** and a **Tournament Center**. The nursery will employ local residents to grow plant material for wetlands, parks, and streetscape projects. The Tournament Center will host local and regional sports events and generate revenue for maintenance, operations, and programming of park facilities. Long-term plans envision expansion by collaborating with the City on relocating the Solid Waste Drop-off Center.

Vacant land at Cherry Hill Homes, a development of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC), offers opportunities for collaboration on interim uses, such as expanding the nursery’s production area, and new mixed-income permanent housing. The adjacent Patapsco Point development proposes housing on a former elementary school site.

- RMB Projects
- Stakeholder Projects
- Existing Assets
- 1

 Patapsco Point Mixed-Income Housing Development
- 2

 Cherry Hill Homes (HABC) Land for New Housing and/or Interim Uses
- 3

 Relocated City (DPW) Solid Waste Residential Drop-Off Center
- 4

 Tournament Center
- 5

 Middle Branch Fitness & Wellness Center
- 6

 BGE Field
- 7

 Native Plant Nursery

- Neighborhood Connectors
- Complete Street
- Baybrook Connector



Hanover-Potee Corridor

Connecting Cherry Hill to the Water

In Cherry Hill, the Plan envisions the Hanover-Potee Corridor as a lively, urban, and walkable extension of the Cherry Hill neighborhood, creating connections and continuity that link the neighborhood to MedStar Harbor Hospital and the waterfront.

The layout builds on recommendations of the 2020 Cherry Hill Transformation Plan and includes new equitable mixed-use development on vacant land between Hanover and Potee Streets and south of Potee. Echoing the Transformation Plan, a combination of mixed-income housing, healthcare, and a grocery store is recommended. The buildings’ bulk and form are envisioned as low to mid-rise and mixed-use: at most three to four stories of residential over a base of commercial-retail or professional services. Building heights are limited to preserve existing views to the water from Cherry Hill and to avoid creating a new wall between the neighborhood and the waterfront. Sidewalks and new local streets integrate with the existing block pattern to maximize connectivity and preserve view corridors.

The Plan seeks to strengthen and complement the mixed-use development with redesigned Hanover and Potee Street corridors that reduce driver speeds and improve safety for pedestrians and bikes. With careful design and integrated traffic analysis, this vision is possible while still accommodating truck traffic. Additional details regarding recommendations for the Hanover-Potee Corridor can be found in Chapter 3 of the Design Vision (Volume 1) and in the Resource Guides (Volume 4).

RMB Projects

Stakeholder Projects

Existing Assets

1

Multi-Modal Improvements to Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge

2

Broening Park Boat Launch & Fishing Pier

3

Greening and Civic Use on City Parking Lots

4

Water Transit Stop

5

Harbor Hospital Marsh (MBRI), Boardwalks, and Outdoor Classroom

6

Potential Redevelopment Site at Southern District BPD Station

7

Hanover-Potee Corridor Mixed-Use Development

8

Mixed-Income Development & Small HS at New Era/Carter G. Woodson BCPS Site

9

Middle Branch Fitness & Wellness Center

10

BGE Field

11

Vietnam Veterans Memorial

The Loop Trail

Neighborhood Connectors

Complete Street

Baybrook Connector



Hanover-Potee Corridor

The two City-owned surface parking lots north and south of MedStar Harbor Hospital offer opportunities for benefits sought by the community. Rather than a single recommendation, the Plan suggests multiple scenarios: “greening” of the lots for new pedestrian connections to the waterfront and for stormwater management; providing overflow parking for facilities at Reedbird Park; and new low-rise development on the northern lot for civic or commercial uses complementing the park.

The Baltimore Police Department’s Southern District headquarters can be considered for redevelopment in the longer term. BPD and other public safety functions can be integrated with other uses, creating an attractive gateway from the bridge and Waterview Avenue.

New wetlands wrapping the end of Middle Branch Park and Harbor Hospital will be constructed in Phase 1 of the Middle Branch Resiliency Initiative (MBRI) between the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge and “Little Hanover Street Bridge.” Visitors will experience this “Harbor Hospital Marsh” via boardwalks and an outdoor classroom along the shoreline trail.

Outdoor Classroom at Harbor Hospital Marsh



Cherry Hill Fitness & Wellness Center



BGE Field



Hanover-Potee Corridor looking north towards Cherry Hill



** Changes to roads are conceptual, designed to inspire conversation. In practice these will require traffic studies to balance the needs of all users, including trucks.*

Middle Branch Park

The Event-filled Heart of the Middle Branch

West of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge, Middle Branch Park is the recreational and social heart of the Middle Branch, with piers for boating and fishing, a large open lawn, and a public boathouse. In response to feedback from the community, the Plan builds on and expands what is already great about the park by adding and improving spaces for events and festivals, parties and family gatherings, fishing, and boating. New features include:

- A sandy beach offering easy water access for kayaks and canoes. Until water quality conditions improve, swimming will not be allowed here or anywhere else in the Middle Branch.
- A new boathouse and rowing piers to accommodate and encourage growth of boating programs facilitated by Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks and Baltimore Community Rowing.
- Converting the existing boathouse into a food concession featuring local vendors, while preserving space for community events.
- A hilltop playground that will be a destination play space surrounded by native meadow plantings, taking advantage of the park’s hilly landscape to feature slides, climbing courses, and lookouts.
- A new event pavilion offering a gathering space for the community.
- A reconfigured event lawn orienting views across the water and sightlines to downtown and offering spaces for both large and small events. A stage at the base of the lawn will host live performances and movies.

RMB Projects

Stakeholder Projects

Existing Assets

1

Sandy Beach for Canoe/Kayak Programming

2

New Boathouse & Rowing Piers

3

Existing Boathouse Retrofit

4

Event Pavilion & Picnic Area

5

Playground

6

Expanded Parking Area

7

Pavilion/Overlook

8

New Crossing at Waterview & Seamon Avenues

9

Event Lawn & Stage

10

New Crossing at Hanover Street

11

Multi-Modal Improvements to Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge

The Loop Trail

Neighborhood Connectors

Complete Street



Middle Branch Park

Details regarding Middle Branch Park programming are illustrated in the bird’s-eye view at right and in renderings on the following pages. Additional details can be found in Chapter 4 of the Design Vision (Volume 1).

Middle Branch Park is difficult to access on foot today, separated from neighboring Cherry Hill by high-speed traffic on Waterview Avenues. The Plan includes new sidewalks and bike lanes as well as a new intersection at Waterview and Seamon Avenue. This intersection, along with new trails and paths, creates a new “front door” to the park, reorienting and prioritizing access for the Cherry Hill community. Additional details regarding access to and connectivity with Middle Branch Park can be found in Chapter 3 of the Design Vision (Volume 1).



Middle Branch Park

** Changes to roads are conceptual, designed to inspire conversation. In practice these will require traffic studies to balance the needs of all users, including trucks.*

New park entrance at intersection of Seamon and Waterview Avenues



Loop Trail in Middle Branch Park



Middle Branch Park

Hilltop playground



Event pavilion & picnic area



Event lawn & stage



Retrofitted existing boathouse



New boathouse & sandy kayak/canoe beach



Middle Branch Marina and Smith Cove

Ecology, Exploration, and Entrepreneurship on the Water

The vision for Smith Cove combines native woodland and restored marsh with family-oriented activities. Plans include boardwalk trails intersecting the Loop Trail and connecting new features west of the boathouse and beach: a renovated Middle Branch Marina, outdoor classroom, “woodland playground,” lawn space, pavilions, and fishing pier. A bridge over Smith Creek connects to Westport’s waterfront, and new pedestrian crosswalks connect across Waterview Avenue.

The privately-owned Middle Branch Marina is envisioned to be renovated and reconfigured, welcoming new public-facing programs and uses. The Environmental Justice Journalism Initiative (EJJI) has partnered with Minorities in Aquaculture (MIA) and the Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET) to lease space at the marina, where they will launch environmental education, research, workforce training, and career development programs. This collaboration brings potential for a robust water-quality monitoring program and, over time, to explore commercial aquaculture in the Middle Branch. The marina will continue to rent boat slips and support an established live-aboard community.

South of Smith Cove and adjacent to the Cherry Hill Light Rail station is an industrial/commercial area that was rezoned in 2016 for mixed-use, transit-oriented development (TOD). The Plan supports this vision, which was echoed in the Cherry Hill Transformation Plan. However, it does not call for removing existing businesses or property owners. In this updated design concept, new development flanks a central, green spine that connects the Light Rail to the waterfront park.

- RMB Projects

Stakeholder Projects

Existing Assets
- 1

Trail Connection to Westport
- 2

Woodland Playground
- 3

Picnic Pavilion & Fishing Pier
- 4

Smith Cove Boardwalk Trail
- 5

Outdoor Classroom
- 6

Renovated Public-Private Marina with EJJI & MIA Programming
- 7

Cherry Hill Light Rail Station
- 8

Cherry Hill Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Zone
- 9

Cherry Hill Connector Trail

- The Loop Trail
- Neighborhood Connectors
- Complete Street



Middle Branch Marina and Smith Cove

If the proposed Superconducting MAGLEV (SCMAGLEV) project comes to pass with a station in Cherry Hill, care should be taken not to simply replace the designated TOD zone with structured parking. Instead, parking structures should include active ground floor retail, be wrapped in mixed-income apartments, and provide for future development above. Parking can anchor the planned TOD zone but is not a substitute for it.

To ensure the future development here and at all other development sites reflects the Plan’s equity frameworks, the following public realm design principles are recommended:

- **Urban Connectivity:** Developments should physically connect to their immediate surroundings by extending the existing street grid into and through the development, preserving view corridors to the water, and creating clear and easily navigable routes to transit stops.
- **Shoreline Continuity:** Developments should connect to and continue Middle Branch recreational trails (as detailed in Chapter 4) and restore the shoreline (per guidelines included in Chapter 3) along the full length of shoreline frontage.

- **Orientation to the Water:** Development should orient building frontages to the water and prioritize retail, commercial, and other active uses along frontages facing the water or adjacent waterfront parks.

These principles are expanded upon further as guidelines for future development in Chapter 5 of the Design Vision (Vol. 1).

Smith Cove woodland playground



Water monitoring station at Middle Branch Marina



Smith Cove pavilion and fishing pier



Westport, Baltimore Peninsula, and East-West Pedestrian Bridge

Connecting Neighborhoods Across the Middle Branch

The shoreline continues northward to the new ONE Westport development and across the water in Baltimore Peninsula (Port Covington). Both projects combine residential, commercial office, and retail uses with waterfront parks and trails. Westport Waterfront Park is a passive green space linking Kloman Street to a shoreline trail and conservation zone. West Covington Park will house sports fields, piers, and an event venue. Both envision water transit stops. Public realm design principles from the previous pages and in Chapter 5 of the Design Vision (Volume 1) apply here as well.

A new East-West Pedestrian Bridge, over 1600 feet in length, closes the Loop Trail between these key developments and provides broad views and potential access to the historic swing truss, an icon of the area’s industrial past. North of the bridge are a new Black Sox Park, honoring the Negro League baseball team that practiced here, and Swann Landing, envisioned for a second canoe/kayak rental program and boat launch.

Westport’s waterfront improvements can happen irrespective of whether the proposed SCMAGLEV project is constructed. However, SCMAGLEV would create another barrier between the neighborhood and its waterfront. Thus, if SCMAGLEV does proceed, it is even more important to ensure high quality physical connections from the neighborhood to the water via complete streets corridors at Wenburn and Kent Streets and the Gwynns Falls Trail connection at Clare Street.

RMB Projects

Stakeholder Projects

Existing Assets

1

Gwynns Falls Footbridge

2

Black Sox Park

3

ONE Westport Development

4

Westport Waterfront Park

5

Westport Light Rail Station

6

East-West Pedestrian Bridge

7

Swann Landing Boat Launch & Canoe/Kayak Rental

8

West Covington Park

9

Baltimore Peninsula / Port Covington Development

10

Water Transit Stop

11

Complete Streets Corridors: Wenburn St., Manokin St., Annapolis Rd.

The Loop Trail

Neighborhood Connectors

Complete Street

Water Transit Route



Westport, Baltimore Peninsula, and East-West Pedestrian Bridge

East-West Pedestrian Bridge connecting Baltimore Peninsula and Westport



Swann Landing



Westport, Baltimore Peninsula, and East-West Pedestrian Bridge

Black Sox Park - early study with small baseball field



Black Sox Park - early study with wooded path



Swann Landing Boat Launch & Canoe/Kayak Rental



Ridgely's Cove

An Urban Maritime Park

North of the East-West Bridge, at the mouth of the Gwynns Falls and beneath the massive I-95 interchange is Ridgely's Cove. This large, shallow water body is surrounded by low-lying infrastructure – BGE's Spring Garden facility and the Wheelabrator Incinerator – and the Carroll-Camden Industrial Area. All of these areas are vulnerable to increased flooding and storm surge caused by climate change. The vision for Ridgely's Cove centers on constructing extensive wetlands and planted berms that can absorb incoming wave energy and protect these vital assets from coastal flooding.

Along with increased resilience, constructing wetlands here offers extraordinary ecological and recreational opportunities. Ridgely's Cove will become an urban maritime park – a unique natural resource area surrounded by the city. Whereas the features and activity in Middle Branch Park are located at the shore and in upland areas, activities and amenities in Ridgely's Cove are situated over and in the water. Tidal creeks or "guts" through the marsh will offer water trails for canoes and kayaks, while boardwalks over the water and suspended from the spans of I-395 would connect Swann Landing at Baltimore Peninsula (Port Covington) to the Gwynns Falls Trail at Stockholm and Sharp Streets, around Topgolf, and across Ridgely's Cove.

● RMB Projects

● Stakeholder Projects

● Existing Assets

1 Bush Street Cycle Track

2 Future Development Opportunities at Incinerator & Bus Station Sites

3 Gwynns Falls Trail

4 Ridgely's Cove Wetlands Park

5 Overwater Boardwalk Trail Network

6 Topgolf Baltimore

7 The Walk at Warner Street

8 Paramount Theater

9 BGE Resiliency Berm and Wetland

10 Swann Landing Boat Launch & Canoe/Kayak Rental

11 Black Sox Park

The Loop Trail

Neighborhood Connectors

Complete Street



Ridgely’s Cove

Two sites important to the area’s Black sports history are located near Ridgely’s Cove and the Gwynns Falls. The field where Negro League baseball team the Baltimore Black Sox practiced was under and just south of where I-95 is today. And the Maryland Baseball Stadium hosted Negro League games where the City’s trash incinerator has stood for nearly 40 years. These sites burden nearby communities with air and water pollution. Hence, it is envisioned they be redeveloped with uses that benefit communities and reflect this unseen heritage.

Scenarios for the incinerator are shown at right and described in Chapter 5 of the Design Vision (Volume 1). North of the incinerator, the Downtown Bus Station also presents opportunities for more intensive development that can integrate intercity buses with other uses.

North and west of Ridgely’s Cove, upgrades to the Gwynns Falls Trail, Stadium Walk, and Complete Streets will increase connectivity to the Middle Branch from Solo Gibbs Park in Sharp-Leadenhall and for residents of Otterbein, Federal Hill, Pigtown, Ridgely’s Delight and Barre Circle. This network comes together at The Walk @ Warner Street, an entertainment zone anchored by Horseshoe Casino, Topgolf, and the Paramount Theater (opening 2023).

Incinerator Site Scenario A: Baseball field



Incinerator Site Scenario B: Ecological research center

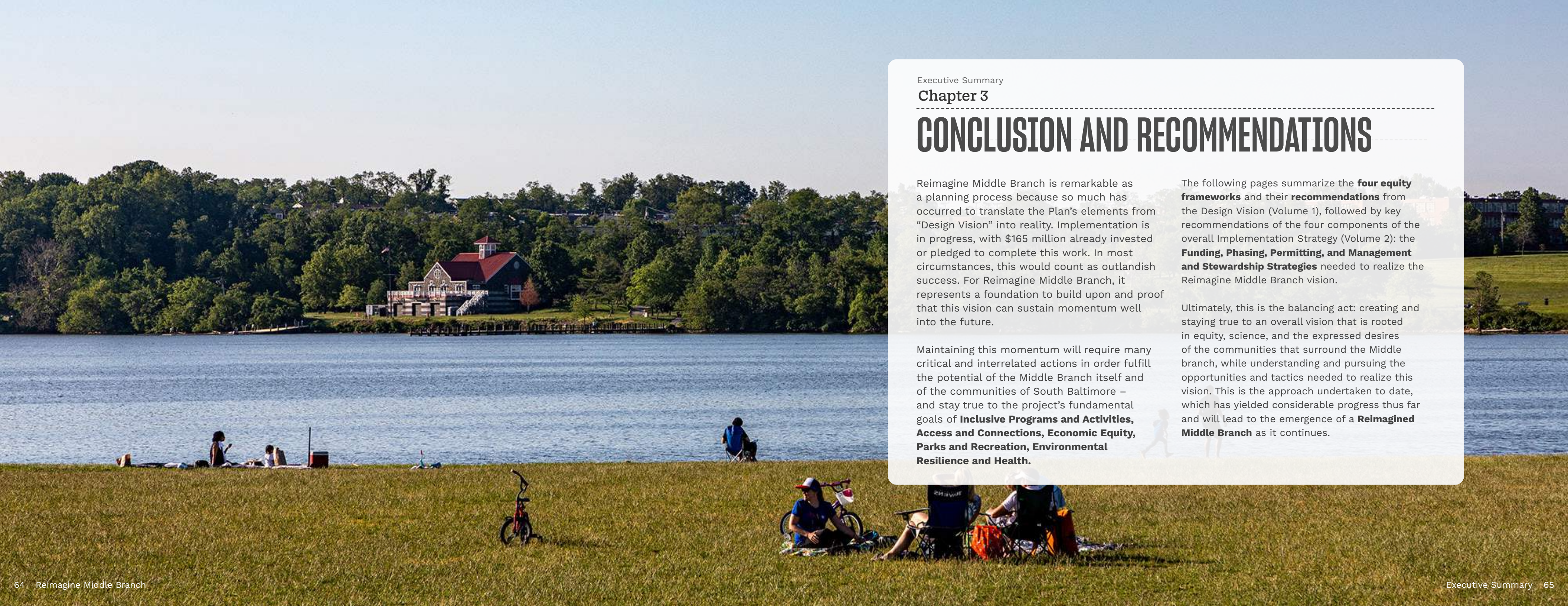


Concept for Underpass Park below I-395



Ridgely’s Cove boardwalks





CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reimagine Middle Branch is remarkable as a planning process because so much has occurred to translate the Plan’s elements from “Design Vision” into reality. Implementation is in progress, with \$165 million already invested or pledged to complete this work. In most circumstances, this would count as outlandish success. For Reimagine Middle Branch, it represents a foundation to build upon and proof that this vision can sustain momentum well into the future.

Maintaining this momentum will require many critical and interrelated actions in order fulfill the potential of the Middle Branch itself and of the communities of South Baltimore – and stay true to the project’s fundamental goals of **Inclusive Programs and Activities, Access and Connections, Economic Equity, Parks and Recreation, Environmental Resilience and Health.**

The following pages summarize the **four equity frameworks** and their **recommendations** from the Design Vision (Volume 1), followed by key recommendations of the four components of the overall Implementation Strategy (Volume 2): the **Funding, Phasing, Permitting, and Management and Stewardship Strategies** needed to realize the Reimagine Middle Branch vision.

Ultimately, this is the balancing act: creating and staying true to an overall vision that is rooted in equity, science, and the expressed desires of the communities that surround the Middle branch, while understanding and pursuing the opportunities and tactics needed to realize this vision. This is the approach undertaken to date, which has yielded considerable progress thus far and will lead to the emergence of a **Reimagined Middle Branch** as it continues.

Summary of Equity Frameworks

1. Restore and Protect the Shoreline

reflects the value residents place on views, ecology, and the interface between land, water and community. Strategies rooted in the Middle Branch’s history and potential as a unique natural and recreational resource include:

- “Living shorelines” that add beauty and habitat and resist erosion.
- “Green infrastructure” techniques that divert run-off and trash from entering the water.
- Supporting and expanding environmental education and “citizen science” programs.
- Incorporating safe reuse of dredge material to build marshes and other new landscapes.



Restore and Protect the Shoreline Recommendations	
1.1	Work with the Maryland Port Administration to utilize tested, underwater material dredged from the Port’s shipping channel to create living shorelines through “beneficial use and innovative reuse of dredged material.”
1.2	Phase placement of dredge material, planned in coordination with the overall project timeline and availability of material from the Port.
1.3	Utilize a range of strategies to create living shoreline zones that respond to site conditions and uses, such as marsh, sandy beach, and rocky edges.
1.4	Implement air and water quality testing and improvements in concert with the living shoreline, including green infrastructure for stormwater management facilities, trash collectors, and upland forest buffers.
1.5	Expand upland habitat areas around the Middle Branch by converting spaces within parks from large expanses of turf grass to a mix of forest and meadow plantings that frame lawns for views and gatherings.
1.6	Develop multiple messaging platforms that share information about Middle Branch’s air and water quality and can reach diverse audiences, public awareness and inspire community engagement and stewardship.
1.7	Encourage the regional scientific community to use Middle Branch as a case study for education and research. Early restoration sites present opportunities to conduct long-term evaluations and develop best practices.

2. Transform Barriers into Connections

advances the priority for “increased connectivity” where highways, railroads and arterials separate communities from one another and block access to water. Strategies that address this goal while balancing the need for efficient movement of vehicles for port-based businesses and other industries include:

- A Shoreline Trail with a central 3-mile “Loop Trail” around the water.
- A new East-West Pedestrian Bridge between Westport and Baltimore Peninsula.
- Complete Streets corridors that connect neighborhoods and parks to the water, transit, and goods and services.
- Improving truck freight routes from Frankfurst Ave. to Route 2 and I-95.



Transform Barriers into Connections Recommendations	
2.1	Conduct a comprehensive engineering study to evaluate Hanover-Potee/Rte. 2 corridor, including structural capacity of Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge, rationalizing through-traffic and improving access for pedestrians, bikes and local traffic.
2.2	Improve multi-modal access on Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge by limiting vehicle traffic to 4 lanes and grouping protected bicycle and pedestrian paths on west side of bridge.
2.3	Create a 3-mile “Loop Trail” as a separated-use facility with generous lanes for both bikes and pedestrians, which encircles the Middle Branch and creates high-quality connectivity and recreation opportunities.
2.4	Construct a new East-West Pedestrian Bridge south of I-95 that closes the “Loop” and connects Westport with Baltimore Peninsula (Port Covington).
2.5	Create a continuous Shoreline Trail for public access along 11 miles of shoreline from Port Covington and Locust Point to Brooklyn and Masonville Cove.
2.6	Create Neighborhood Connector trails linking the Middle Branch Loop Trail and Shoreline Trail to neighborhood parks and regional trails.
2.7	Implement Complete Streets improvements to increase connectivity within neighborhoods and to the waterfront; implement “quick-build” projects to test routes while long-term capital projects are in planning and design phase.
2.8	Collaborate with MTA & DOT (Charm City Circulator) to improve transit to goods and services, local employers such as Port and industrial firms nearby, and regionally, including water transit.
2.9	Enhance truck freight access between Port and highways with southbound turn from Frankfurst Avenue onto Potee Street, to reach I-95 via Patapsco Avenue and South Caton Avenue.
2.10	Maintain through-truck and local truck routes, balancing modes according to City’s Complete Streets Manual and SHA standards; engage industry, Port/MDOT and City DOT in updating City’s Truck Route Map, acknowledging business trends and last-mile distribution needs.

Summary of Equity Frameworks

3. Activated and Inclusive Parks

envisions a “park-shed” of high-quality, well-maintained facilities in neighborhoods, connected via safe, inviting pathways to a network of waterfront parks, trails and overlooks around the Middle Branch. Strategies that address this goal while creating equitable access and programming that reflects input from local communities include:

- Coordinating capital projects and programming across the park-shed.
- Linking shoreline parks and open spaces, and creating connections to neighborhood parks.
- Creating waterfront anchors that draw diverse uses and support operating costs.
- Expanding canoe/kayak and rowing programs with new boat houses, piers and landings.



Activated and Inclusive Parks Recommendations	
3.1	Coordinate planning and implementation of capital projects and programming across the park-shed; this includes addressing short-term maintenance needs in order to maximize benefits from existing facilities while planning for long-term projects.
3.2	Connect existing waterfront parks with proposed parks, developments, and natural areas; unify parks and open spaces within an accessible, activated public space network.
3.3	Create new waterfront anchors, which provide major amenities and create destinations in waterfront parks.
3.4	Reshape and reorient the Middle Branch Park lawn with views across the water, sightlines to downtown, and a performance stage for festivals and other events.
3.5	Create a covered, open-air event pavilion to be situated near the event lawn in Middle Branch Park.
3.6	Build a new, expanded boathouse that accommodates future growth in BCRP’s boating programs and Baltimore Community Rowing; continue to address and improve facilities’ needs in existing boathouse and piers and removing submerged debris during planning stage.
3.7	Transform the existing boathouse into a concession and event space.
3.8	Improve existing piers, add new piers, and diversify ways to access the water with new beaches and boat launches, all in support of increased access to water-based recreation and educational programming.
3.9	Curate and produce a reliable series of year-round, culturally relevant programming, including arts events, water-safety, swimming, and other youth and adult sports and wellness programs.
3.10	Develop Splash!, a waterfront event produced for engagement during the planning process, from a one-time event into an annually recurring program.
3.11	Establish a new waterfront park along the Westport waterfront, along with a memorial for the Baltimore Black Sox and other South Baltimore sports legends.

4. Equitable Development

is the framework for ensuring that current residents and future generations of South Baltimore participate in and benefit from “reimagining,” restoring and revitalizing the Middle Branch. Strategies that leverage this vision to support the growth of existing communities include:

- Sustaining and expanding investments in youth, workforce development, small businesses, and CDC capacity-building.
- Assembling capital for equitable investment in housing and mixed-use development.
- Establishing an African American Heritage District rooted in historical commemoration AND current cultural expression.
- Support for “green” social venture enterprises and new business start-ups.



Equitable Development Recommendations	
4.1	Continue funding established equity initiatives including YouthWorks grants, South Baltimore Employment Connection Center, Commercial Corridor (“Main Streets”) support, and the South Baltimore Community Development Fund.
4.2	Create “pipelines” or “ladders” of opportunity for residents to access nearby jobs in South Baltimore, such as in healthcare and Port-related industrial sectors.
4.3	Expand two educational pilot programs, the Morgan State University Fellowship and the Community Design Lab, into sustained annual initiatives.
4.4	Support disadvantaged businesses around the Middle Branch, helping them to become M/W/DBE certified and connecting them with funding opportunities.
4.5	Utilize South Baltimore Community Development Fund, a new mechanism tailored to leveraging equitable investments in housing, businesses and community assets.
4.6	Honor and celebrate African American culture through creation of a heritage district.
4.7	Support & catalyze site-specific developments by fostering collaboration among communities, property owners, financing entities, local government, anchor tenants, and user groups.
4.8	Plan anchor projects in or adjacent to parks to activate the waterfront, support O&M costs, and create employment, education and business opportunities for residents.
4.9	Support environmental education and aquaculture programs of local non-profits Environmental Justice Journalism Initiative and Minorities in Aquaculture operating at Middle Branch Marina.
4.10	Establish a native plant nursery, managed and staffed by South Baltimore residents, to supply park improvement projects and Middle Branch communities with locally grown plants and locally made building materials.
4.11	Start seasonal food truck program, supporting local business growth and laying groundwork for year-round Waterfront Marketplace selling culturally authentic food, products and art.
4.12	Add additional multi-purpose fields to Reedbird Park to enable hosting regional athletic events and tournaments.

Implementation Strategies

The components of the Plan’s Implementation Strategy, outlined in further detail in Volume 2, provide four sets of guideposts for advancing the larger vision of a reimagined Middle Branch and the surrounding the communities over the coming years and decades.

- 1. The **Funding Strategy** outlines an aggressive but feasible approach to securing resources for the elements that comprise the Design Vision.
- 2. Funding, in turn, informs the **Phasing Strategy**, which provides the gameplan and timeline for prioritizing RMB Projects and coordinating with Stakeholder Projects. It is the knitting together of initiatives led through RMB and those led by other stakeholders that result in this transformational vision.

- 3. The **Permitting Strategy** tells us how we get there, at least how we navigate the myriad regulatory reviews that will be required for evaluation and approval of projects that achieve the ambitious goals for shoreline restoration and transforming on-land spaces along the Middle Branch within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.
- 4. Lastly, the **Management and Stewardship Strategy** lays out an inclusive and collaborative model for leadership and partnerships that are needed to coordinate the many organizations and interests now engaged in this work.

Whereas recommendations for the **Equity Frameworks** of the Design Vision largely address “what” is in the Plan (the projects and programs that, if realized, would collectively add up to the overall

vision), the recommendations of these four **Implementation Strategies** (shown in the tables that follow) address the “who, how, when and where” of making things happen. These recommendations comprise a framework for actions – many of which must be taken concurrently in order to advance the interrelated elements that comprise the Design Vision.

This is certainly a large and complex undertaking. Yet, the tremendous track record of success to date is testament to the fact that the RMB partners and the communities of South Baltimore are prepared to seize this opportunity and keep moving forward with persistence and care.

Middle Branch Park



Funding Strategy: Summary of Recommendations	
1.1	SBGP, SB7, and the City strategize and align funding priorities for RMB projects and programs, ongoing operations, and equity initiatives.
1.2	City and SBGP set annual allocations of casino LIG funds towards RMB initiatives with targets for capital, O&M, programs, and equity investments.
1.3	SBGP, SB7, and community organizations in Brooklyn, Curtis Bay & Locust Point create an agreement to include neighborhoods in implementation plans; include an allocation of SB7 funding for RMB initiatives.
1.4	Consider hiring full-time, dedicated funding development staff to monitor grant opportunities, build relationships with elected officials and funders, and oversee proposal development.
1.5	Develop an inclusive programming strategy for break-even, nominal, or free access for community residents; identify operators and content providers, expense and revenue projections, staffing, equipment, and facility needs.
1.6	Consider models to weigh the financial benefits and risks of serving as a programming operator versus contracting with third-party providers.
1.7	Analyze revenue-generating opportunities (such as facility rentals, concessions, permitting fees), so that the City, the RMB management entity, and other partners share benefits of user fees and program revenue.
1.8	Assess opportunities to enter into ground leases or strategically purchase properties that will reduce costs or generate revenue for RMB operations and equity initiatives over the long term.
1.9	Conduct market/feasibility studies for sites under consideration, including restrictions, expenses, and potential revenue.
1.10	Determine the appetite of stakeholders for upgrading and monetizing existing parking lots.
1.11	Conduct a traffic and parking study to determine parking needs and possible locations where leases can be secured for parking revenue, including electric vehicle charging stations.
1.12	Explore pay-as-you-go (PAY- GO) funding model where incremental tax revenues are leveraged to a dedicated fund for community priorities like small business development and affordable housing.
1.13	Engage a municipal finance expert to understand the opportunities and limitations of applying an area-based (instead of project-based) TIF and other forms of value capture that do not require bonding.
1.14	Explore other opportunities to apply innovative value-capture models that promote equity and community investments.
1.15	Develop sponsorship guidelines with recommended ranges of funding to be eligible for naming rights and other related benefits.
1.16	Hold early conversations with local South Baltimore businesses, regional corporations, and foundations to determine interest in sponsoring RMB programs and projects and criteria they apply in evaluating opportunities.

Implementation Strategies

Phasing Strategy: Summary of Recommendations	
2.1	Phase 1 (Immediate - 2 Years): Deliver on the large pipeline of projects that are already funded and underway, in order to maintain momentum and build public trust.
2.2	Phase 2 (2 - 5 Years): Build out the core network of connectivity, establish major equity initiatives, and undertake “quick-build” enhancements.
2.3	Phase 3 (5 - 10 Years): Harness the success from the previous phases to build coalitions and attract funding for multiple large capital projects.
2.4	Phase 4 (10-20 Years): Maintain steady, ongoing progress that builds on the success established in the first decade, continuing to add to an already robust network of parks, trails, economic development, and equity projects around the Middle Branch.

Permitting Strategy: Summary of Recommendations	
3.1	Identify early-win projects that need to be completed as standalone improvements, to allow for permitting evaluation and approval as quickly as possible.
3.2	Where possible, submit one permit application for multiple near term sites so they can proceed under a single Tidal Wetlands License.
3.3	Present multiple times at the Joint Evaluation Committee to identify and address agency concerns.
3.4	Plan for and quantify environmental benefits (such as wetlands, habitat areas, tree plantings) as offsets for anticipated impacts of hard structures like new docks, rooftops, roads, pathways and parking areas, in both Joint Evaluation Committee and Critical Area Commission filings.
3.5	Establish program- or plan-wide mitigation banks for both phosphorous and vegetative cover.
3.6	Establish a program- or plan-wide mitigation bank for stormwater management practices.
3.7	Begin proactively identifying and compiling the supporting documentation that will be needed for permit-filings.

Management and Stewardship Strategy: Summary of Recommendations	
4.1	Oversee ongoing projects, “gap-filling activities,” and incubation process.
4.2	Hire or designate a RMB program manager.
4.3	Reconvene updated RMB Steering and Executive Committees and schedule regular briefings.
4.4	Identify and meet regularly with informed advisors to explore future organizational models and the steps to put them in place.
4.5	Meet with similar, peer open space management entities around the country to learn how they have established, sustained, and grown their organizations.
4.6	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with lead community organizations in Locust Point, Brooklyn, and Curtis Bay regarding coordination on RMB initiatives.
4.7	Develop an MOU with Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks related to maintenance and operations (M&O) of new and existing parks and facilities in the park-shed.
4.8	Select an organizational model for the future management entity, and begin strategic planning for its start-up.
4.9	Establish an initial staffing plan and operating budget for the future management entity.
4.10	Create capital, permitting, and funding plans for realizing the first 2 to 5-year project pipeline (see Phasing Strategy).

Broening Park Pier

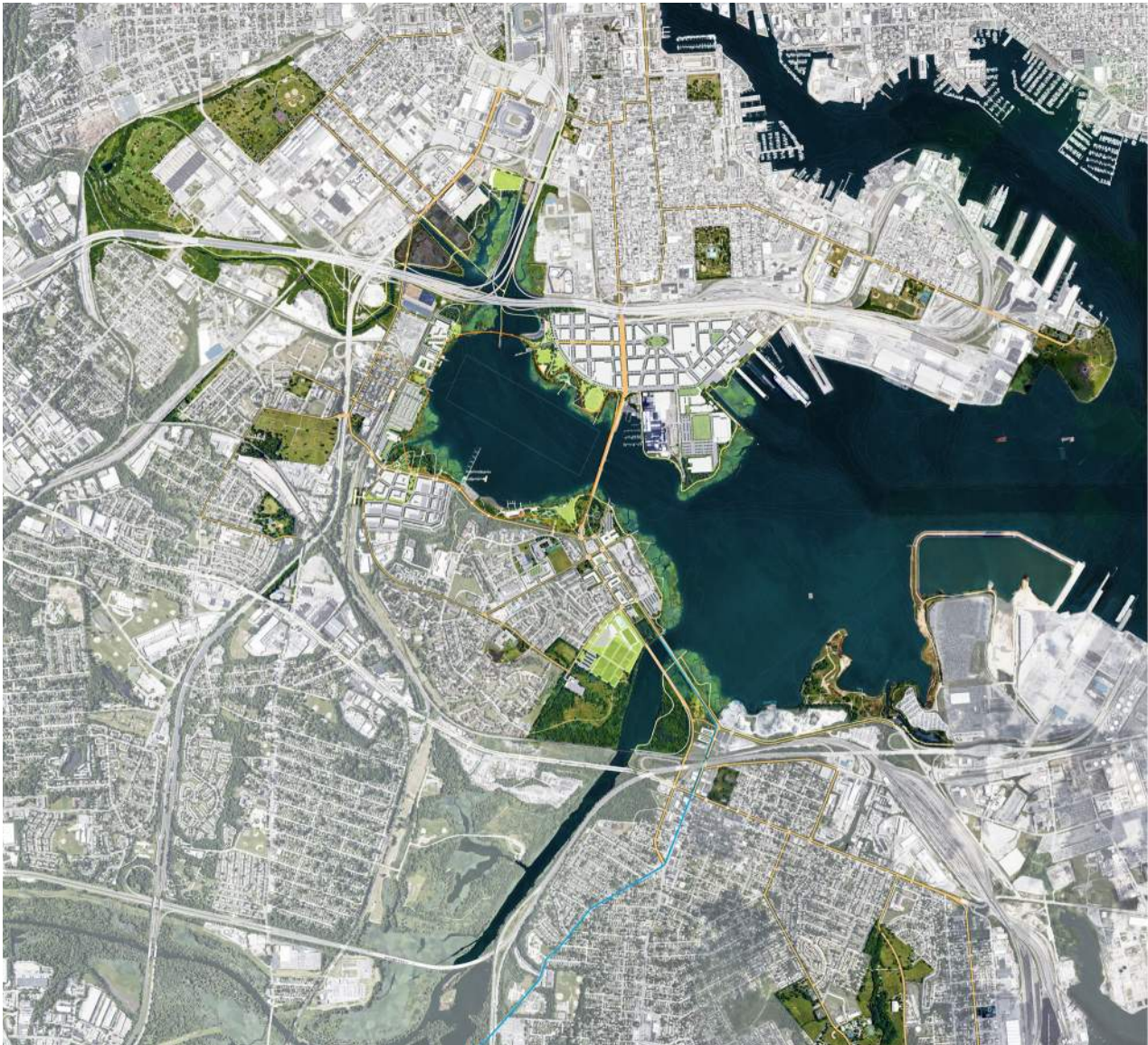


A Reimagined Middle Branch

The Middle Branch will be Baltimore’s next great waterfront, with 11 miles of world class parks, trails, programs, and economic development.

This transformation is well underway. More than \$120 million in Federal, State, Local, Casino, and Philanthropic funds have already been raised, and a number of the projects listed in this Plan are already underway or completed. Maintenance and programming enhancements have already improved the activity and attractiveness of open space. Equity initiatives have brought millions of dollars to low-income neighborhoods. And the market is responding in kind, with hundreds of millions of dollars of private investment now taking place. This Plan is not just possible – it is already happening.

Expect activity to increase after this Plan is released. In the near future, communities will notice ongoing engagement, activation projects, and invitations to help design the next generation of capital improvements. As time goes on, they can also expect to participate in a long-term management structure for this effort, collaborate on equitable economic development projects, and cut the ribbons on the capital projects they helped design.



For more information, see the Reimagine Middle Branch Implementation Strategy. The Implementation Strategy (Volume Two of this report) includes detailed budgetary, fundraising, phasing, and organizational strategies for aggressively moving this work forward.

Baltimore deserves no less. The neighborhoods of South Baltimore require positive change, and they should demand it from this project. Reimagine Middle Branch is not too ambitious – it is exactly ambitious enough.

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REIMAGINE MIDDLE BRANCH

The background is a full-screen abstract image featuring various shades of blue. The colors range from a deep, dark navy blue to a bright, light sky blue. The patterns are fluid and organic, resembling the movement of water, the texture of a liquid surface, or perhaps the folds of a heavy fabric. There are no straight lines or geometric shapes; instead, there are continuous, flowing waves and ripples that create a sense of depth and motion.

REIMAGINE MIDDLE BRANCH