



— INVESTING TOGETHER —
A DECADE OF COMMUNITY PROGRESS
BALTIMORE NEIGHBORHOOD COLLABORATIVE



On the cover: The faces of some of Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative's supporters and people who live and work in the communities BNC serves.

REVITALIZING A CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Community development in Baltimore City has come of age. And the Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative is a key reason. In BNC's first decade of work, it has made forward-looking and critically needed investments in neighborhoods across the city.

Many of Baltimore's neighborhoods are rich in history and possibility, yet they face economic challenges and social problems. BNC believes that revitalizing city neighborhoods must be at the top of the civic agenda.

To make a difference, BNC pools funding from banks, foundations and local businesses, and brings together experts from these institutions to decide how to best invest those funds — through direct grants to on-the-ground organizations, staff training, community-wide planning efforts, or research and analysis.

Using this collaborative process, BNC has invested millions of dollars in community development, supporting essential work in struggling neighborhoods determined to become more prosperous. The goal is to reinvigorate community involvement, attract new investment and improve the quality of life for all residents. BNC supports community groups that are capable of making such change happen. That means building on a community's strengths, such as its location, housing stock and the sheer will of the people who live there.

The first decade has been filled with remarkable achievements. BNC is pleased to present this 10th anniversary report and looks forward to engaging many more partners in the essential work of community development in Baltimore.

“Over the last 10 years, BNC funders have come together to share their knowledge, expertise and resources to achieve better results in some of Baltimore City's most vulnerable neighborhoods. By working with local nonprofit organizations and community leaders, we hope to continue strengthening neighborhoods and making communities more supportive of residents.”

— Scot Spencer, Manager of Baltimore Relations at the Annie E. Casey Foundation and chair of the Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative.

Pooling Funds and Collaborating to Find New Solutions

Community revitalization is hard work, and progress can be slow. Because of that, many of Baltimore's philanthropic institutions shied away in the past from investing in the gritty work of supporting neighborhood recovery.

For BNC, such work is the only focus. In its first decade, BNC's strategy and track record have prompted banks, foundations and other city institutions to overcome their reluctance and make meaningful investments in Baltimore communities.

From left to right: Cheryl Casciani of the Baltimore Community Foundation, Rahn Barnes of Provident Bank, and Betsy Ringel of the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation help direct BNC's investment strategies.



BNC was formed in the mid-1990s by a small group of Baltimore-area grantmakers concerned that a growing number of city neighborhoods were showing signs of decline.

With a philosophy of building on strength, the grantmakers seized the opportunity to make a positive impact. They created a collaborative funding pool, housed at the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers, to attract new funding partners and to strengthen local community development organizations and the distressed communities they served.

The early partners designed a role for the collaborative that no other institution had: bringing funders together to discuss the problems Baltimore neighborhoods faced and to identify opportunities to address them.

BNC made grants, but its support didn't stop there. The collaborative also provided training and brought community groups together to share their experiences and learn from each other. And BNC was not afraid to take risks. Unlike many other funders, the collaborative committed to multi-year grants and invested in neighborhoods that were not getting much attention.

Over the years, the number of donors and grants has climbed. Key funders are drawn by the opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues on important funding decisions, supporting projects that have been vetted both by BNC staff and experts in the field.

“As a bank, we tended to be more interested in brick and mortar projects, but instinctively we knew there was a need for this kind of support,” says Rahn V. Barnes,

vice president and community development manager for Provident Bank, a longtime BNC supporter. “BNC created a way to get involved with an organization that would invest in the ‘soft’ costs which are so important for community development.”

BNC gives funders the chance to visit community groups and size up their ability to tackle the issues in their neighborhoods.

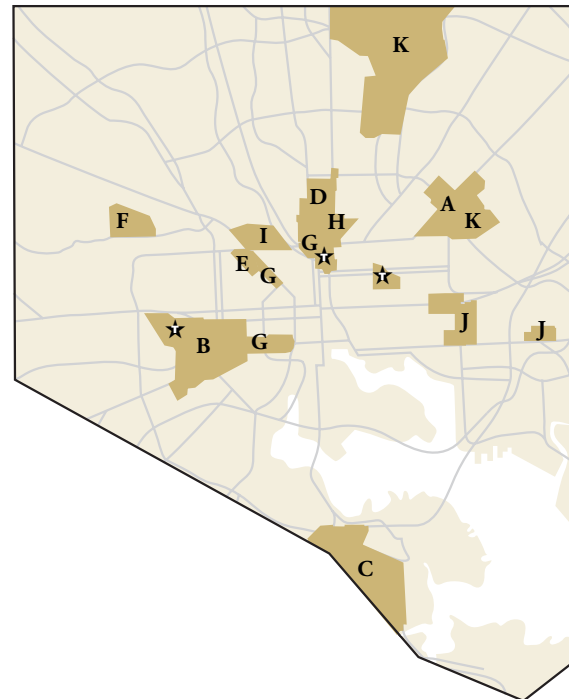
“There’s nothing like getting out in a neighborhood you’re only vaguely aware of and meeting people who turn out to be really smart and capable. That’s a very good thing,” says Timothy D. Armbruster, president and chief executive of the Goldseker Foundation, which helped launch BNC.

Some funders appreciate BNC’s willingness to take on daunting projects that require great patience.

Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative

2006 Grants

- | | |
|---|--|
| A Belair-Edison Neighborhoods, Inc. | G Jubilee Baltimore |
| B Bon Secours of Maryland Foundation/Operation ReachOut Southwest | H People’s Homesteading Group |
| C Brooklyn and Curtis Bay Coalition | I Reservoir Hill Improvement Council |
| D Charles Village Community Benefits District | J Southeast Community Development Corporation |
| E Druid Heights Community Development Corporation | K St. Ambrose Housing Aid |
| F Garwyn Oaks United Neighbors Association | ★ Transit-Centered Community Development Target Areas
-East Baltimore
-Station North
-West Baltimore MARC |



“It’s a place where solutions to sticky problems can be incubated,” says Cheryl A. Casciani, program director of the Baltimore Community Foundation, another BNC supporter. “Some of the most effective community organizations could not have been able to do what they did without BNC’s patient support.”

"It's a place where solutions to sticky problems can be incubated."
— Cheryl Casciani, Baltimore Community Foundation

Funders work as a team to select which projects receive BNC funding. The process allows for significant discussion and interaction among funders, whether they represent a major foundation with projects in many Baltimore neighborhoods, or a smaller organization whose grant to BNC is its only community development expenditure.

“The BNC process requires a lot of time and effort. But you come out of it with a sense that you’ve made the best decisions possible,” says Betsy F. Ringel, executive director of the Blaustein Philanthropic Group. “These meetings allow me to meet with six or eight of my key colleagues. I always felt this was my crash course in community development.”

Those who support the work of BNC appreciate the value of tackling Baltimore’s community issues together. BNC promotes promising strategies and helps convene organizations throughout the city around policies and programs to advance neighborhood revitalization. Its support was essential to the launch of the Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative, an ongoing effort to stimulate homeowner investment in undervalued city neighborhoods. BNC has also helped to draw attention to issues of crime and drugs, vacant housing, transit-oriented development and affordable housing.

“The problems of the city are far more significant than what any one segment can ever undertake, whether it’s government, foundations or corporations,” says Provident’s Barnes. “We’ve learned over time that this work should be done in a collaborative way, and that’s been a strength of BNC.”

Strengthening Communities Across Baltimore

Believing and Investing Early

The Reservoir Hill Improvement Council was an all-volunteer organization with big dreams but few resources in the mid-1990s. Despite its prominent location in central Baltimore and remarkable housing stock, the neighborhood had abandoned homes, high crime and sanitation problems. The volunteers worked hard to try to stem the decay, but they needed help.

BNC saw the opportunity in the Reservoir Hill area as well as the challenges the community faced. It gave the council its first grant in 1997. That early support allowed the council to hire staff and begin to unify the community. Attendance at community meetings swelled.

“When the collaborative came through with funding, that provided the initial seed money to get things going,” says Russ Moss, a 22-year resident of Reservoir Hill who has been active in the council. “It meant we could have the resources to begin to have an office, to begin to have staff, where you didn’t have just well-meaning people with hope and vision but who didn’t have the resources to make things happen.”



BNC’s support has continued for nearly a decade. Its investment spurred other public and private investments in the community as well as the confidence of individual residents.

The Reservoir Hill Improvement Council is now a full-fledged community group with a staff of five and an active board. It oversees an array of projects in the community, ranging from cleanup days and greening projects to working with housing officials, advocating for the local elementary school, and addressing sanitation issues.

“Certainly with that first grant from BNC, that allowed us to leverage additional resources – from the federal government, Healthy Neighborhoods and foundations,” says John Henry Ruffin, the council’s executive director. “It gave us that crucial step up the ladder.”

Those investments have also gotten city government involved in improving the neighborhood. In recent years, sales prices and property values have increased dramatically, and the city govern-



Residents of Reservoir Hill join in a spring cleanup day sponsored by the Reservoir Hill Improvement Council.



ment sold dozens of vacant properties to homeowners who are restoring long-neglected houses and making Reservoir Hill their home. The neighborhood itself is increasingly recognized as one of the city's emerging jewels, home to a diverse group of committed residents who relish city life.

“What we're trying to do is create a model for urban redevelopment,” says Ruffin. “We're creating an atmosphere that encourages success.”

Valuing Resident Involvement

Alex Martray, a student at the Maryland Institute College of Art, works with children from southwest Baltimore to prepare a wall for a mural, a project sponsored by Operation ReachOut Southwest.



In the 1990s, Bon Secours Hospital resisted the urge to relocate and stayed rooted in southwest Baltimore, determined to help rejuvenate the struggling community around it. To make that happen, effective community participation and leadership was essential, so the hospital helped create a group to represent the residents.

The group, eventually named Operation ReachOut Southwest (OROSW), turned to BNC for funding. That money allowed OROSW to hire a full-time employee, who worked to unify a dozen neighborhoods that had often stood aloof from each other.

Nearly 10 years after that first grant, BNC still supports OROSW, which has racked up a remarkable list of achievements, including the leveraging of millions of dollars in investments by several banks, foundations and government agencies.

The investments have led to a community-wide improvement plan, and a financial center called Our Money Place, which provides affordable banking and other services. OROSW has worked with government agencies and others to develop streetscape plans and developed the Clean & Green Program to transform more than 500 vacant lots into attractive green spaces. Concerted anti-crime efforts led to a reduction in crime in targeted areas. And OROSW has repeatedly provided residents with the opportunity to be involved in ongoing community redevelopment projects – in a real way and early enough to have an impact.

“The support of BNC has allowed us to really work with the people of the area, who can direct us. They live here. They know what they want,” says Joyce Smith, OROSW's executive

director. “By giving for years, BNC has provided a benefit to everyone here, including the hospital, the OROSW organization and the residents.”

Kevin Jordan, associate director of the Bon Secours of Maryland Foundation, which has also received support from BNC, says it is crucial to have a strong community group to partner with the hospital in its wide-ranging efforts to improve the neighborhood.

“Choosing the course of having a committed group of residents is essential,” Jordan says. “We started with a process of neighborhood organizing; the redevelopment work came on top of that. Without neighborhood leadership, we never would have come up with a lot of these ideas, without residents saying this is what we want, this is why we want it.”

Connie Fowler, a lifelong resident of southwest Baltimore who helped launch OROSW, says the community is progressing, thanks in large part to the hard work of OROSW.

“I think we’re headed in the right direction,” Fowler says. “OROSW has been getting us to all pull together.”

*“I think we’re
headed in the
right direction.”*

— Connie Fowler, lifelong resident
of southwest Baltimore

Putting Critical Support in Place

More people are discovering the charms of the Belair-Edison neighborhood: solid, affordable housing stock, a location in northeast Baltimore convenient to downtown and proximity to the beautiful, 300-acre Herring Run Park. Property values have climbed significantly while the average number of houses on the market at any one time has plummeted.

The upswing in Belair-Edison is due in large measure to the steady work of Belair-Edison Neighborhoods, Inc. (BENI), which promotes, supports and improves the community by attracting homebuyers, marketing the area, organizing special events, helping local businesses and lobbying for the neighborhood with city agencies.

Beginning in 1998, BNC’s support for BENI allowed the organization to lead a community planning process. The combination of resources that BNC offered was crucial in helping BENI thrive, says Barbara Aylesworth, the group’s executive director.

“They’ve been instrumental in providing operational funds, training for community groups and peer networking,” she says. “A lot of foundations fund programs, but BNC is funding a very particular kind of revitalization effort that formerly didn’t get a lot of support. It’s been very important to us.”

BNC’s support for planning and community outreach helped reorient the neighborhood’s approach to revitalization. Rather than continuing to play defense against the area’s problems, the organization began

a proactive effort to build on the area’s assets, market the community in a positive way, and attract new homeowners. Belair-Edison became the pilot neighborhood for the city-wide Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative.

Today, the Belair-Edison area has become a far more cohesive community. A community newspaper published three times a year keeps residents informed, and BENI offers grants to blocks to improve their “curb appeal.” Herring Run Park is now the site of community events, and 53 residents have used Healthy Neighborhood low-interest loans to fix up their houses. The neighborhood continues to attract a diverse group of homeowners, including artists, teachers and nurses – often thanks to the marketing and outreach efforts of BENI.

“BENI really helped us to see where the neighborhood has come from and where it is heading,” says Angela Gaude, whose family moved into a rowhouse facing Herring Run Park three years ago. “We couldn’t have afforded to move into one of the more established neighborhoods. But this is a good neighborhood, and it’s up and coming.”

From left to right: Vanessa Lopez and her daughter, Aszana, and Julia Donn and her parents, Angela Gaude and Frank Donn, have recently moved to Belair-Edison, attracted by its affordable housing, proximity to Herring Run Park and community spirit. Belair-Edison Neighborhoods, Inc. works with prospective homebuyers to learn about the community.



Providing Venture Capital

A committed band of Baltimoreans came together nearly a quarter century ago as the People’s Homesteading Group, determined to reclaim vacant houses across the city, improve them through “sweat equity,” and turn them over to homeowners.

In the late 1990s, the group shifted its strategy and began concentrating on a single neighborhood – the area near North and Greenmount avenues – and to move into broad community development work, not just housing redevelopment.

The group faced immense challenges of poverty, vacant housing, crime and drug abuse in a community that was hit hard by riots in the late 1960s and had declined steadily since.

In 2000, BNC began supporting the group’s work. “There was no other philanthropic source willing to take a risk on People’s Homesteading Group as it moved from a citywide housing group to a neighborhood-based community revitalization group,” says Michael Mazepink, the organization’s executive director.

BNC funding helped pay for a staff member to lead a wide-ranging community redevelopment plan that focused on “Anchors of Hope,” stable institutions that the community could build around. The homesteading group also launched a host of activities, such as establishing block watches to improve safety, suing absentee landlords who neglected properties, encouraging commercial development and fostering beautification efforts. The group also continued to acquire and rebuild houses.

Some longtime residents bought into the effort, astonishing their neighbors by planting lovely gardens on vacant blocks – unexpected outposts of beauty.

“The result was that people reclaimed the neighborhood,” Mazepink says.

“There’s a high failure rate with this kind of work, but the payoff rate is very high. BNC seeds the in-between subtext issues in a thoughtful way. The BNC concept is a valuable one as it can bundle some high-risk ventures that no one organization is willing to take a chance on.”



Grace Willis, a longtime resident of the Barclay-Greenmount community, tends to the garden she planted near her house — a green symbol of the community’s resilience. People’s Homesteading Group works with residents such as Ms. Willis to build the community.

Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative

1996-2006

CONTRIBUTORS

Abell Foundation
Associated Black Charities
William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund
Baltimore Community Foundation
Baltimore Equitable Insurance Foundation
Bank of America
Black & Decker
Jacob & Hilda Blaustein Foundation
Louis & Henrietta Blaustein Foundation
Bradford Bank
Jane Brown
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Community Development Partnership Network
Robert & Florence Deutsch Philanthropic Fund
Empower Baltimore Management Corporation
Enterprise Community Partners
Fannie Mae Foundation
Ford Foundation
France-Merrick Foundation
Goldseker Foundation
Hoffberger Foundation
Krieger Fund
M & T Bank
Marianist Sharing Fund
Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
Mercantile-Safe Deposit & Trust Fund
Merck Family Fund
Open Society Institute - Baltimore
Provident Bank
Signal Hill Capital
St. Joseph Medical Center Foundation
St. Paul Travelers Foundation
Aaron Straus & Lillie Straus Foundation
SunTrust Bank
Surdna Foundation
United Way of Central Maryland
Wachovia Bank
Jack Wilen Foundation

GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS

Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
Barclay-Midway & Old Goucher Coalition
Belair-Edison Neighborhoods, Inc.
Better Waverly Community Organization
Bon Secours of Maryland Foundation
Brooklyn and Curtis Bay Coalition
Charles Village Community Benefits District
Citizens Planning and Housing Association
Community Law Center
Comprehensive Housing Assistance Inc.
Druid Heights Community Development Corporation
Garwyn Oaks United Neighbors Association
Govans Economic Management Senate
Greater Northwest Community Coalition
Healthy Neighborhoods, Inc.
Jewish Funds for Justice
Jubilee Baltimore
Neighborhood Design Center
Neighborhood Housing Services of Hillendale
Operation ReachOut Southwest
People's Homesteading Group
Reservoir Hill Improvement Council
Southeast Community Development Corporation
Southwest Seven Neighborhood Housing Services
St. Ambrose Housing Aid
University of Baltimore Center for Community Technology Services
Youth as Resources

PARTNERS

Baltimore City Department of Planning
Baltimore Community Lending
Baltimore Housing
Faith Fund, Inc.
Healthy Neighborhoods, Inc.
Mayor's Office of Community Investment
University of Maryland School of Social Work Social Work Community Outreach Service

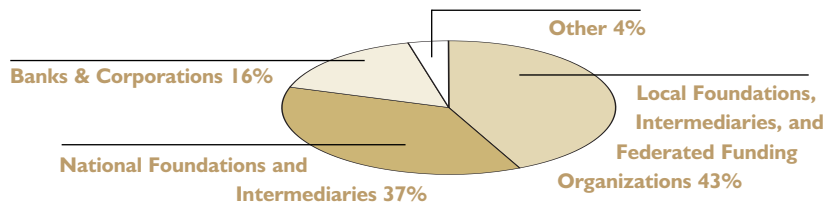
Effective Community Investment

In BNC's first decade, its investments have led to solid returns. In the neighborhoods the collaborative has helped, residents invested in their homes, saved for their families' futures, and joined with neighbors to organize community events and improve their blocks. Neighborhoods once considered at risk of dramatic decline, such as Belair-Edison and Reservoir Hill, experienced significant investment by new homebuyers as well as existing residents.

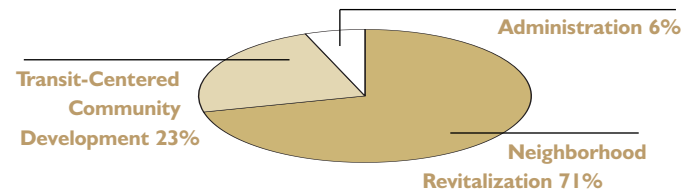
Today, BNC's role continues to expand in response to the need for assistance. It is part of a Ford Foundation initiative to promote fairer housing and economic opportunities in Baltimore. BNC is focusing on community development in neighborhoods bordering three of the city's transportation hubs – the West Baltimore MARC station, the area around Penn Station, and the East Baltimore community near the planned life sciences center. The initiative promotes approaches to development that capitalize on Baltimore's existing and planned mass transit networks, and offers bright prospects for these Baltimore communities, including access to regional jobs. At the same time, BNC also has launched a new Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative that fosters mixed-income neighborhoods by promoting homeowner investments and targeted

housing development, while ensuring that current homeowners are able to remain in their community and benefit from greater prosperity.

BNC Contributions 1996-2006



BNC Funding Allocations 1996-2006



Looking Ahead

A decade ago, the Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative was only an idea – one intended to expand and support the important work of community development in the city. Today, the collaborative is a key partner in those efforts in neighborhoods throughout the city. A diverse group of two dozen contributing members believes in the mission and strategy of BNC, strongly positioning it to focus on the city’s pressing needs and rich possibilities.

BNC’s work has helped reinvigorate community development in Baltimore. Today, these efforts are widespread, vibrant and creative. BNC and its partners are proud to have contributed to this work.

In the years ahead, the organization plans to launch new projects while also maintaining and enhancing its effective neighborhood grantmaking. It will encourage the participation of new funders intent on making a difference in the city. And it will seek new and different ways to bring funders and communities together to make change possible.

As it grows and evolves, BNC will continue to base its work on the ideal that investing in struggling Baltimore neighborhoods is a critical component of ensuring a bright future for the city.



BNC funders and staff work together to invest in critical community development initiatives around Baltimore.

From left to right, some of BNC's funders and staff:

Clarence Snuggs (Enterprise Community Partners), Carol Gilbert (Goldseker Foundation), Will Backstrom (Bradford Bank), Ann Sherrill (BNC), Beth Harber (Abell Foundation), Cheryl Casciani (Baltimore Community Foundation), Rahn Barnes (Provident Bank), Joyce Moskowitz (Bank of America), Pamela King (Open Society Institute - Baltimore), Tracey Barbour (Abell Foundation), Scot Spencer (Annie E. Casey Foundation), Betsy Nelson (Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers) and Sally Scott (BNC).



**Baltimore Neighborhood
COLLABORATIVE**

2 E. Read St., 2nd floor

Baltimore, MD 21202

Phone: 410-727-0169

Fax: 410-727-7177

E-mail: info@bncbaltimore.org

www.bncbaltimore.org