

REIMAGINE MIDDLE BRANCH

Parks, projects & programs to connect
communities in South Baltimore

The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan

Executive Summary

The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan was prepared for:

The City of Baltimore



South Baltimore Gateway Partnership



Parks & People



City of Baltimore Department of Planning



Baltimore City Recreation & Parks



And 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
- *Ethan Cohen, Senior Advisor for Community & Economic Development
- Chris Ryer, Director, Department of Planning
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- Chris Firehock, Baltimore City Mayor’s Office
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Steering Committee

- Dr. Franklin Lance, Chair

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- 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

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

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The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan
Executive Summary

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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.

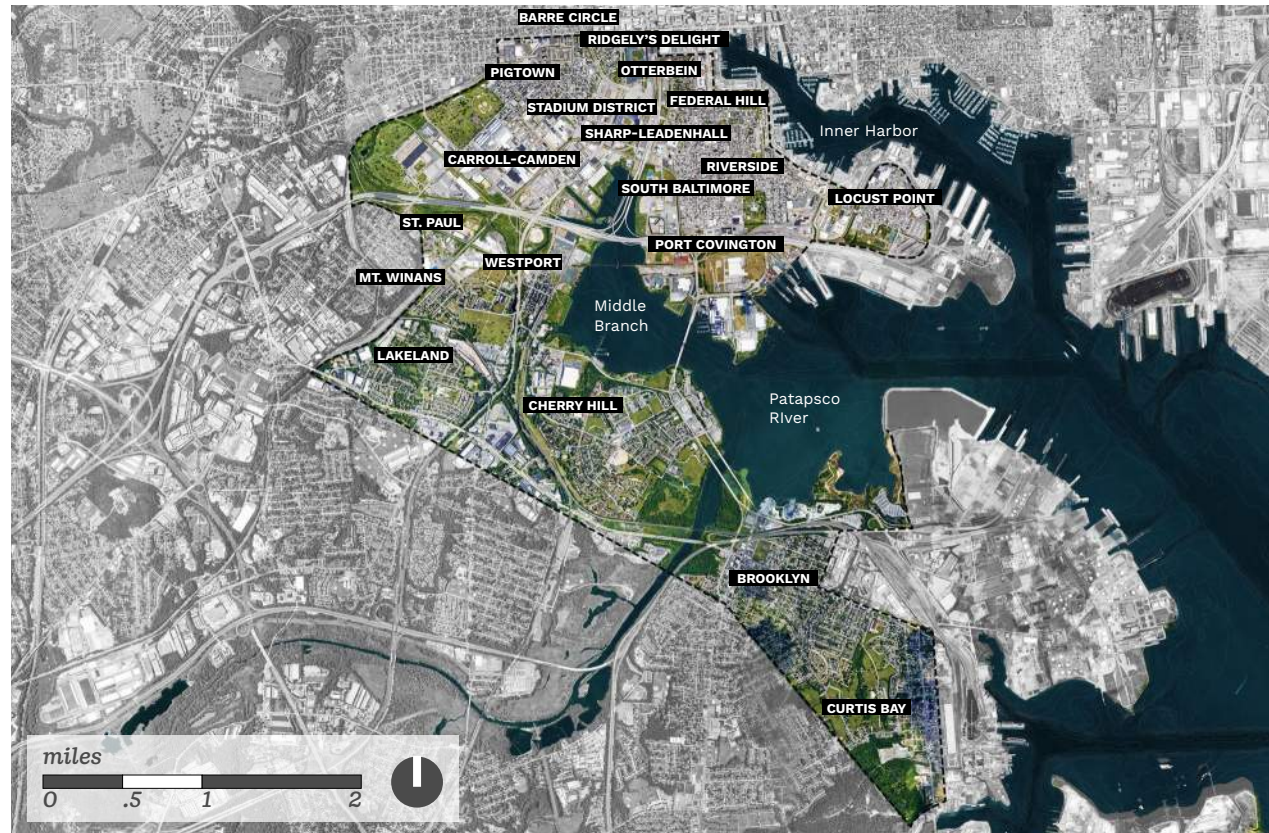
By holistically addressing issues of environment, health, and equity, Reimagine Middle Branch strives to realize more than Baltimore's next

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 Plan
- 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 Plan

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 Plan 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

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.

Splash! event



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, Baltimore and the Bay, 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 channels 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 Port Covington.

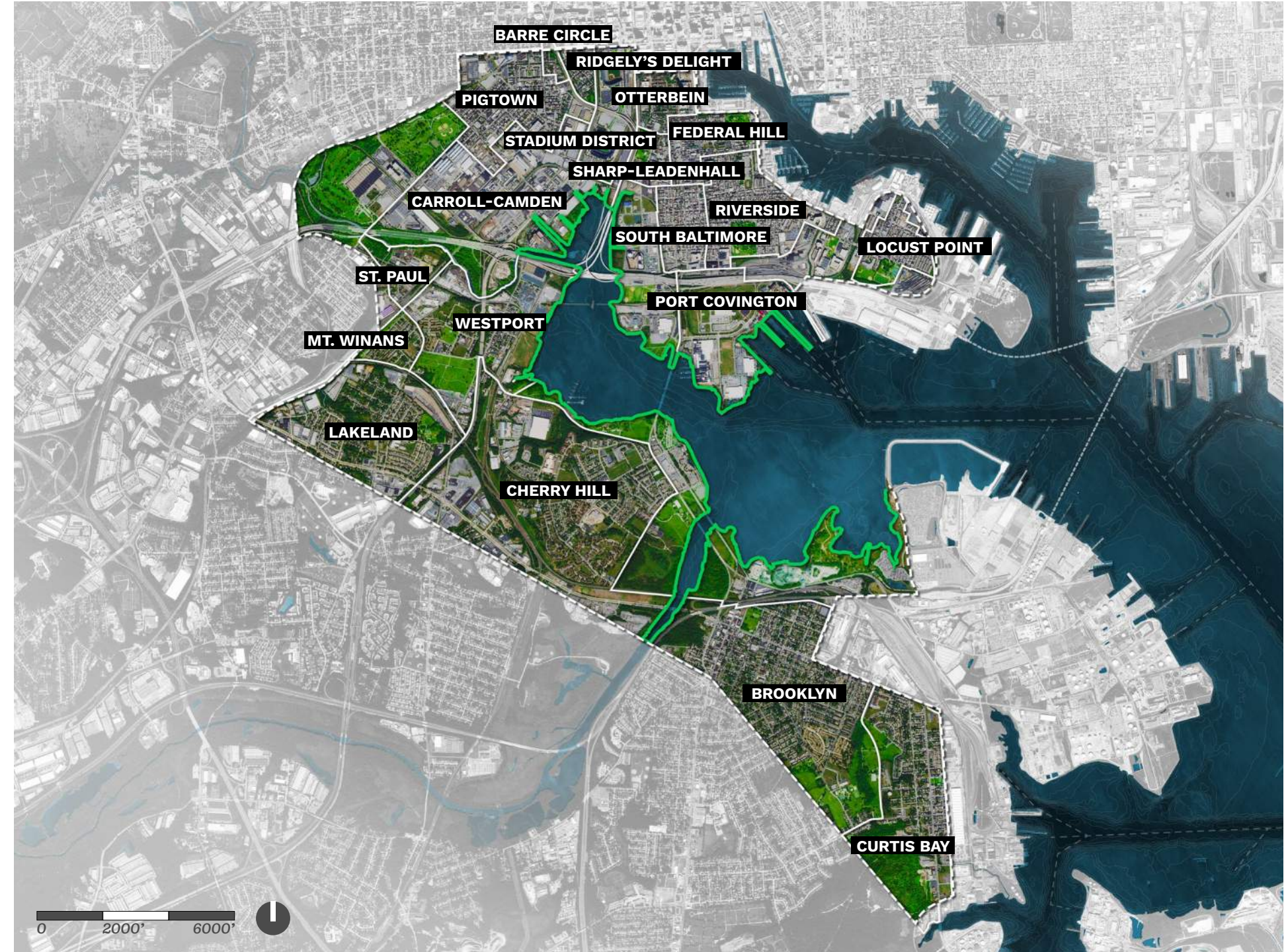
Over 30 parks and open spaces



19 neighborhoods



More than 11 miles of shoreline



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

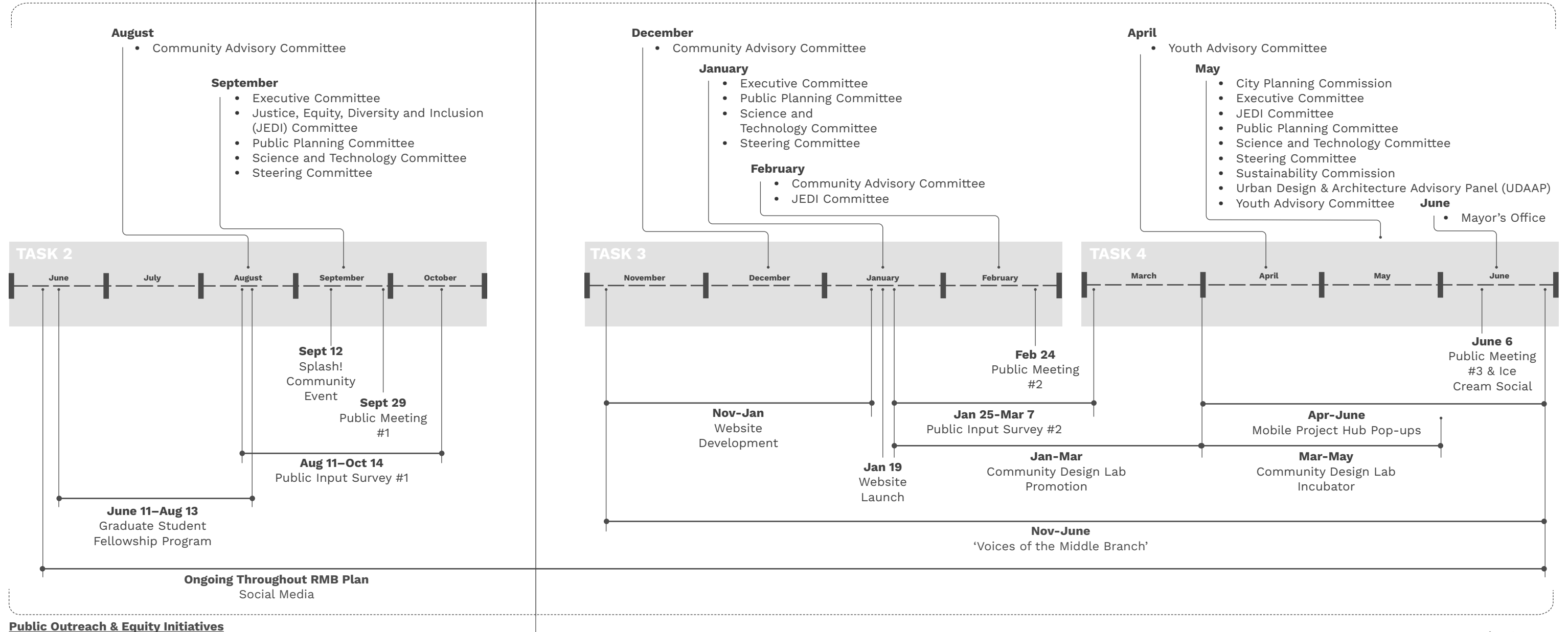
Continued outreach and engagement validated design direction and revealed key aspects of the Plan which needed additional attention.

Task 4: Demonstrate March-June, 2022

Final 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



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.

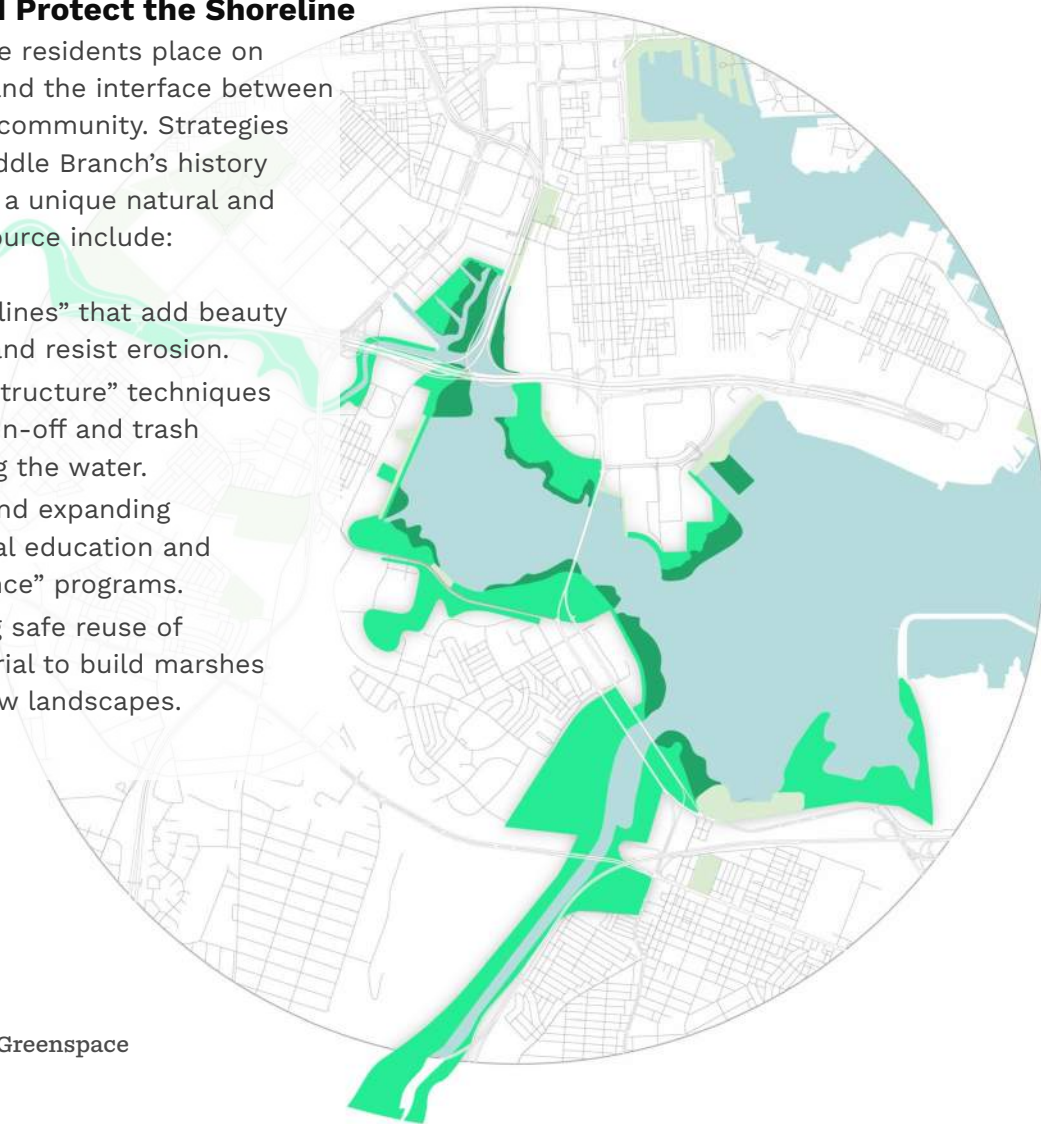
The frameworks serve as guides for finding “co-benefits” among strategies and for leveraging opportunities with like-minded partners. They will inform the implementation of innovative solutions to place-making and community-building around the Middle Branch, along with tactics for funding long-term stewardship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






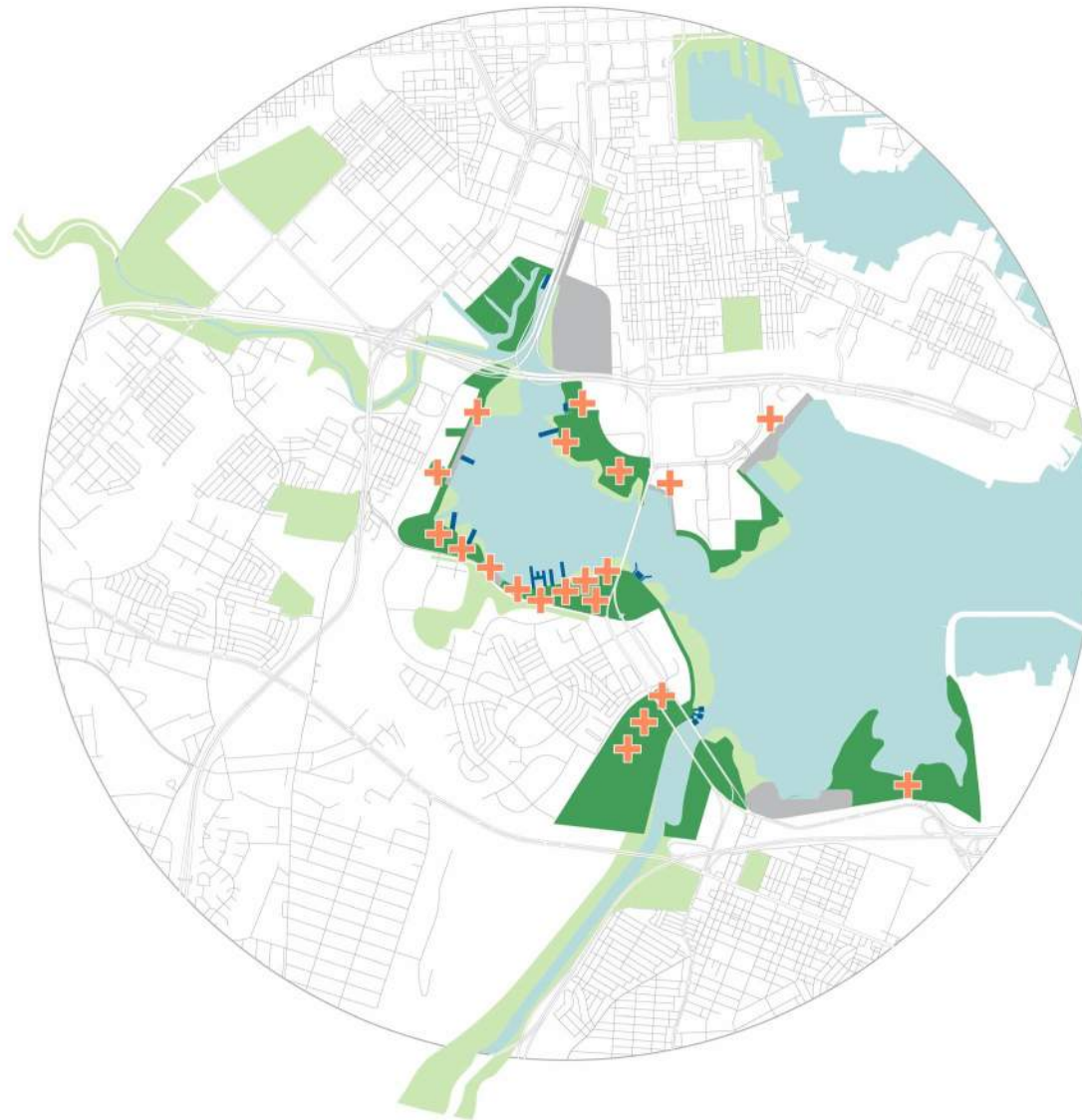
Four Equity Frameworks

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

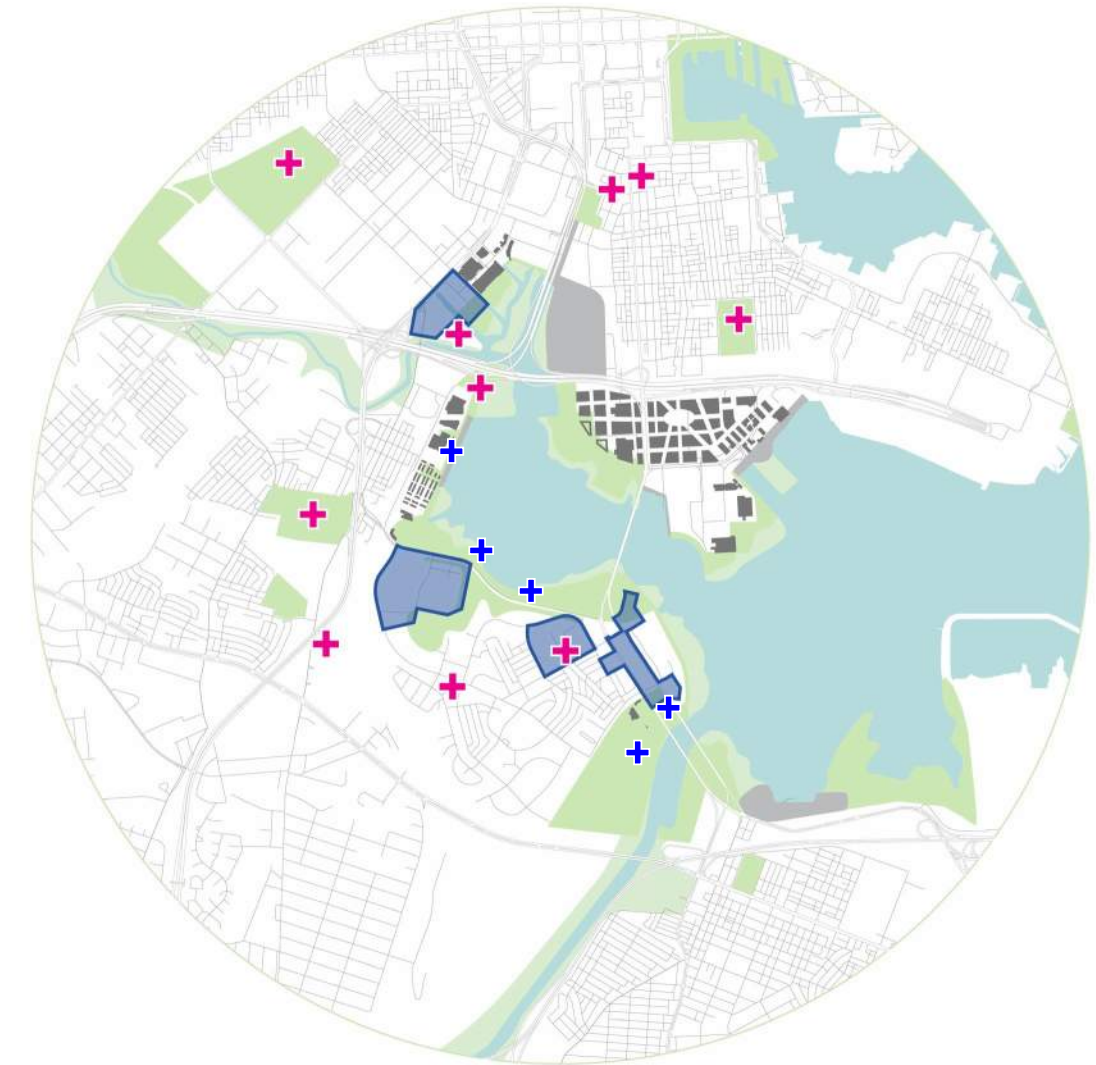


4. Equitable Development

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



Implementation Strategies

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 **Implementations Strategies** (recapped 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.

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** tell 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.

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

The Mobile Project Hub at Cyclovia in Carroll Park



Implementation is Underway

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.

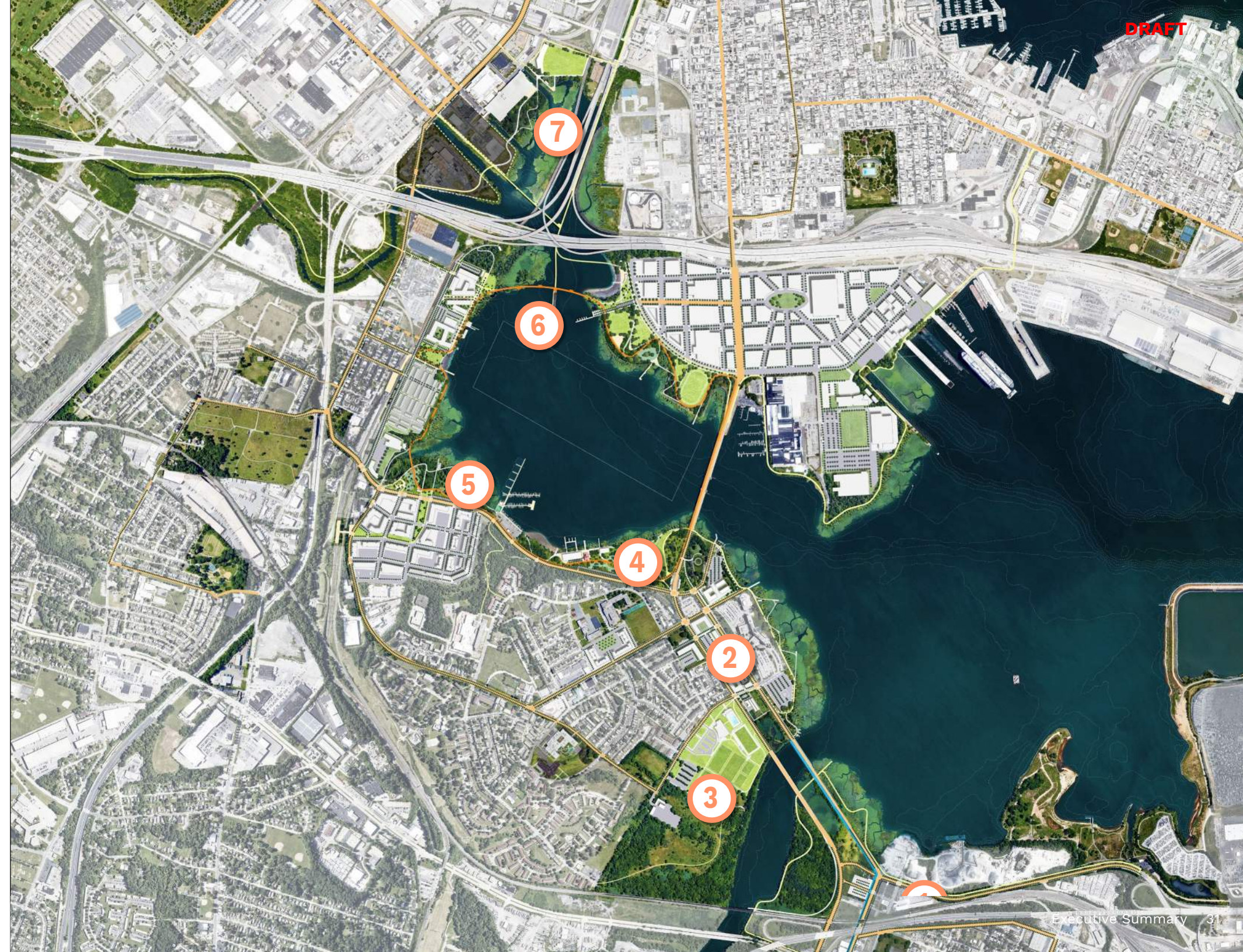
The work done to date or currently in the pipeline adds up to over \$165 million. More than the sum of the funds raised, this represents an initiative with an unexpectedly broad capacity to sustain momentum and harness outside funding sources beyond the City’s resources or any one organization’s budget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

Chapter 2

A WALK AROUND THE MIDDLE BRANCH

The four equity frameworks come together to create the long-term design vision. The vision integrates investments in parks, programs, transportation networks, and development with existing and ongoing partner projects into a single and comprehensive vision for the Middle Branch. This vision is illustrated in a “walk” around the Middle Branch, detailing the plans for transformation neighborhood by neighborhood. Beginning along the southern shore of the Middle Branch and moving north, the walk highlights the following areas:

1. The Brooklyn Waterfront
2. The Hanover-Potee Corridor
3. Reedbird Park
4. Middle Branch Park
5. Middle Branch Marina and Smith Cove
6. Westport Waterfront, Port Covington, and the East-West Bridge
7. Ridgely’s Cove



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The Brooklyn Waterfront

Where Industry Meets Nature

The walk begins in Brooklyn and Curtis Bay, where roads and infrastructure needed to access the Port of Baltimore and industry shape the landscape, and access to the water and the rest of South Baltimore is limited. The vision for the Brooklyn Waterfront centers on the environmental restoration of the shoreline and improving access for the residents of Brooklyn and Curtis Bay, while maintaining vital access to industry and the Port of Baltimore's 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 oversaw the restoration of Masonville Cove, which now serves as a national model for strategic partnerships, environmental restoration, and community-centered programming. Today Masonville Cove is an valued community and environmental asset. While the Plan seeks to connect Masonville Cove to the larger network of open spaces, the 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. The Plan's 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
- Existing Assets
- Partner Projects

- 1 "Little" Hanover & Potee Bridge Intervention
- 2 Reedbird Wetland Nature Walk
- 3 Reedbird Island Boat Launch & Woodland Trail
- 4 Brooklyn Transit Hub at MTA
- 5 Brooklyn Commercial Corridor
- 6 Neighborhood Park Improvements
- 7 MPA's Proposed Masonville Cove Connector
- 8 Masonville Cove Environmental Center
- 9 Farring-Baybrook Rec Center

- The Loop Trail
- Neighborhood Connectors
- Complete Street
- Baybrook Connector



The Brooklyn Waterfront

Complete Streets treatments on Hanover Street, East Patapsco Avenue, and Pennington Avenue create newly safe and welcoming routes to the waterfront and within the neighborhoods. A transformed intersection of Frankfur Avenue and the Route 2 corridor will facilitate a southbound turn onto Potee Street.

The 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.

Masonville Cove Environmental Center



Masonville Cove Environmental Center



Masonville Cove Environmental Center



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.*

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. Further details regarding these recommendations can be found in Chapter 3 of this report and in the Resource Guides.

- RMB Projects
 - Existing Assets
 - Partner Projects
- 1 Multi-Modal Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge
 - 2 Broening Park Boat Launch & Fishing Pier
 - 3 Greening and Civic Use on City Parking Lots
 - 4 Cherry Hill Water Transit Stop
 - 5 Hanover Marsh, Boardwalk & Outdoor Classrooms
 - 6 Opportunity for Increased Green Space
 - 7 Opportunity for Development
 - 8 Mixed-Income Housing at New Era HS & Carter G. Woodson Elementary Campus

- The Loop Trail
- Neighborhood Connectors
- Complete Street
- Baybrook Connector



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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.

Outdoor classroom at Harbor Hospital



Cherry Hill Fitness & Wellness Center



BGE Field



Hanover-Potee Corridor looking north towards Cherry Hill



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Reedbird Park

Middle Branch's Destination for Sports & Recreation

At the water's edge, a trail fronts constructed wetlands that extend from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge to the Patapsco River. These wetlands provide critical flood protection to MedStar Harbor Hospital. The trail connects Middle Branch Park to the newly completed Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center, along with two proposed place-based equitable development projects (further details regarding these recommendations can be found in Chapter 5 of this report):

1. **A Native Plant and Tree Nursery** that will employ local residents to grow plant material for the constructed wetlands, parks, and streetscaping initiatives proposed in this Plan. If the need for products exceeds the growing capacity on this site, additional sites in South Baltimore can be identified in the future, including the option of leasing vacant land from the Housing Authority property for this as an "interim" use.
2. **A Tournament Center** that will host local and regional sports events and generate revenue for the maintenance, operations, and programming of park facilities. Long-term plans envision expanding sports facilities into acreage under the purview of the City's Department of Public Works and finding a new, more suitable site for the Solid Waste Residential Drop-off Center.

The trail extends south from the Fitness and Wellness Center along the Patapsco River, with the potential to meet up the Patapsco Regional Greenway and Southwest Area Park in Baltimore County.

- RMB Projects
 - Existing Assets
 - Partner Projects
- 1 Site for Mixed-Income Housing Development
 - 2 Future Possible Nursery Expansion Site
 - 3 Relocated DPW
 - 4 Tournament Center
 - 5 Cherry Hill Fitness & Wellness Center
 - 6 BGE Field
 - 7 Cherry Hill Nursery

- The Loop Trail
- Neighborhood Connectors
- Complete Street
- Baybrook Connector



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
 - Existing Assets
 - Partner Projects
- 1 Sandy Kayak/Canoe Beach & Launch
 - 2 New Boathouse & Rowing Piers
 - 3 Existing Boathouse Renovations
 - 4 Event Pavilion & Picnic Area
 - 5 Playground
 - 6 Pavilion Overlooking Event Lawn
 - 7 New Crossing at Waterview & Seamon
 - 8 Event Lawn & Stage

- The Loop Trail
- Neighborhood Connectors
- Complete Street



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Middle Branch Park

Details regarding Middle Branch Park programming recommendations can be found in Chapter 4 of this report.

The park is difficult to access on foot today, separated from neighboring Cherry Hill by high-speed traffic on Waterview Avenue. 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” for Middle Branch Park, reorienting and prioritizing access for the Cherry Hill community.

Details regarding Middle Branch Park access and connectivity recommendations can be found in Chapter 3 of this report.

- 1 New Crossing at Hanover Street
- 2 Event Lawn & Stage
- 3 New Crossing at Waterview & Seamon
- 4 Pavilion Overlooking Event Lawn
- 5 Playground
- 6 Expanded Parking Facilities
- 7 Event Pavilion & Picnic Area
- 8 Existing Boathouse Renovations
- 9 New Boathouse & Rowing Piers
- 10 Sandy Kayak/Canoe Beach & Launch
- Shared Use Path



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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.*

Intersection at Seamon and Waterview



Loop Trail in Middle Branch Park



Middle Branch Park

Hilltop playground



Event lawn & stage



New boathouse & sandy kayak/canoe beach



Event pavilion & picnic area



Renovated boathouse



Middle Branch Marina and Smith Cove

Environmental Education, Research, and Entrepreneurship on the Water

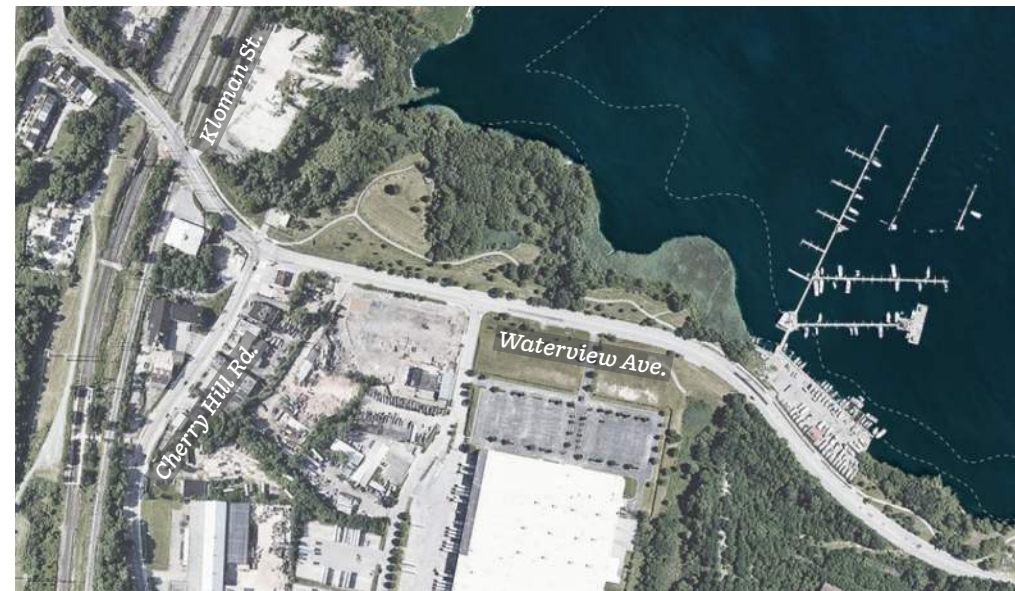
Continuing west past the beach and new boathouse, the privately-owned Middle Branch Marina is renovated and reconfigured to welcome new public-facing programs and uses. The Environmental Justice Journalism Initiative (EJJI), in partnership with Minorities in Aquaculture (MIA) and the Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET) recently signed a lease and plan to operate environmental education, scientific research, workforce training, and career development programs from the marina. There is great potential to work with these organizations to develop a robust water quality monitoring program here. Over time, these programs may expand to include commercial aquaculture in the Middle Branch. The marina will continue to offer private boat slips for rent and support the established live-aboard community.

The vision for Smith Cove is characterized by native woodlands, restored marshes, and Chesapeake maritime forests. Plans for Smith Cove Park include trails, boardwalks, and outdoor classrooms near the marina to support EJJI's educational programming. The Plan includes family-oriented park features – a woodland playground, fishing piers, a picnic lawn, and small pavilions for cookouts and gatherings – plus pedestrian crossings at Waterview Avenue.

South of Smith Cove and adjacent to the Cherry Hill light rail station sits a large area rezoned in 2016 for transit-oriented, mixed-use development. The Plan supports the TOD zoning here, echoed in the Cherry Hill Transformation Plan. However, it does not call for removing existing businesses or property owners.

- RMB Projects
 - Existing Assets
 - Partner Projects
- 1 Trail Connection to Westport
 - 2 Woodland Playground
 - 3 Smith Cove Picnic Pavilion & Fishing Pier
 - 4 Smith Cove Boardwalk
 - 5 Smith Cove Picnic Outdoor Classroom
 - 6 Rehabilitated Public/Private Marina (EJJI & MIA)
 - 7 Cherry Hill Transit Hub
 - 8 Cherry Hill Station Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
 - 9 Cherry Hill Connector Trail

- The Loop Trail
- Neighborhood Connectors
- Complete Street



* We support the intent of the TOD zoning near Cherry Hill Light Rail, and have shown how future TOD development can fit neatly into this plan. However, we are not calling for the removal of existing users or landowners.

Middle Branch Marina and Smith Cove

In this vision, new development is complemented by a green central space along the route from the light rail station to the park.

If the proposed Cherry Hill SCMAGLEV station comes to pass, 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 waterfront development sites is reflective of the Plan's equity frameworks, a series of public realm design guidelines 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.

Smith Cove woodland playground



Water monitoring station at Middle Branch Marina



Smith Cove pavilion and fishing pier



Westport, Port Covington and the East-West Pedestrian Bridge

Connecting Neighborhoods Across the Middle Branch

The Middle Branch's green shoreline continues north, fronting new private waterfront developments in Westport and Port Covington. Plans in both areas combine a mix of uses, including new residential, commercial office, and retail space, with waterfront parks and trails. Public realm design guidelines, summarized above and detailed in Chapter 5 of this report, are recommended for these developments as well.

The Westport Waterfront combines passive natural areas with a green waterfront promenade, whereas West Covington Park is animated with sports fields, piers for fishing and boating, and a waterfront event venue.

Connecting the two areas is the East-West Pedestrian Bridge that links Westport to Port Covington. Spanning over 1600 feet, it will complete the Middle Branch Loop Trail. Along with providing critical connectivity, the bridge at its midpoint offers access to the historic CSX swing bridge, a singular, iconic destination providing broad views across Middle Branch.

The Westport Waterfront improvements can happen irrespective of whether the proposed Northeast SCMAGLEV project is eventually constructed, although the project would create yet another barrier between the neighborhood and its waterfront. If Northeast SCMAGLEV does move forward, it will become even more important to ensure high quality physical connections between the community and the shoreline.

- RMB Projects
 - Existing Assets
 - Partner Projects
- 1 Gwynns Falls Footbridge
 - 2 Black Sox Park Lookout
 - 3 ONE Westport Development
 - 4 Westport Waterfront Park
 - 5 Westport Light Rail Connection
 - 6 East-West Pedestrian Bridge
 - 7 Swann Landing Boat Launch & Rental
 - 8 West Covington Park
 - 9 Port Covington Development
 - 10 Water Transit Stop

- The Loop Trail
- Neighborhood Connectors
- Complete Street
- Water Transit Route



Westport, Port Covington and the East-West Pedestrian Bridge

East-West Bridge connecting Port Covington to Westport looking west



Swann Landing



Ridgely's Cove

An Urban Maritime Park

North of the East-West Bridge, at the confluence of the Gwynns Falls and the Middle Branch and beneath the massive I-95 interchange is Ridgely's Cove. This large, shallow body of water is surrounded by low-lying infrastructure – BGE's Spring Garden facility and the Wheelabrator Incinerator – and the Carroll-Camden Industrial Area, which are vulnerable to increased flooding and storm surge caused by climate change. The Plan's recommendations in Ridgely's Cove center on the construction of large wetlands and planted berms that can absorb incoming wave energy and protect these vital assets.

Along with increased resilience, construction of wetlands here offers extraordinary ecological and recreational opportunities. Ridgely's Cove will become an urban maritime parkland – a unique natural resource area at the mouth of the Gwynns Falls similar to Masonville Cove.

Whereas the features and activity in Middle Branch Park are located on the shore and upland, uses and amenities in Ridgely's Cove are situated over and in the water. Tidal creeks and small waterways will offer opportunities for kayaking and canoeing, while boardwalks will create over-water trails. Swann Landing, on the shoreline north of West Covington Park, will serve as the recreational hub with boat rentals and kayak launch.

- RMB Projects
 - Existing Assets
 - Partner Projects
- 1 Bush Street Cycle Track
 - 2 Future Development Opportunity at Incinerator Site
 - 3 Ridgely's Cove Wetlands Park
 - 4 Ridgely's Cove Boardwalk Connection
 - 5 Top Golf
 - 6 Boardwalk Trail at Top Golf
 - 7 Boardwalk Trail, BGE resiliency Berm & Wetlands

- The Loop Trail
- Neighborhood Connectors
- Complete Street



Ridgely's Cove

Two sites important to the area's rich Black sports history are located on the west edge of Ridgely's Cove: the locations of former Negro League baseball fields at Black Sox Park under and just south of I-95, and the Maryland Baseball Stadium where the City's trash incinerator now stands. Today, these sites burden nearby communities with air and water pollution. The Plan recommends that these sites be developed with alternative uses to benefit nearby communities and reflect this incredible heritage. Potential future scenarios are detailed in Chapter 5 of this Plan.

Black Sox Park - early study with small baseball field



Black Sox Park - early study with wooded path



Concept for Underpass Park below I-395



Ridgely's Cove boardwalks



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 Plan. The Implementation Plan (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.

Join us.



The background of the image is a close-up, high-angle view of water with numerous small, concentric ripples. The colors range from a deep, dark blue to a lighter, bright cyan, creating a textured, shimmering effect. The ripples are distributed across the entire frame, with some appearing more prominent than others.

REIMAGINE MIDDLE BRANCH