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EXCITING CHANGES IN CENTRAL BALTIMORE: EXAMINING THE HOMEWOOD COMMUNITY PARTNERS INITIATIVE

Gillian Rathbone-Webber

I. Introduction

The Homewood Community Partners Initiative (HCPI) is one of the newest waves of development based in Baltimore.¹ HCPI has a different approach to development than other economic development plans in Baltimore and, in comparison to some failed attempts in other areas of the City, it seems to be working. Baltimore has long suffered from blight, high rates of vacant buildings, and high crime. There have been many previous attempts to address and repair those issues with only some success. HCPI is attempting to mitigate all those issues by way of a community development agenda and a five-part plan.² While the execution of the plan extends beyond a simple five steps and will be spread out over many years, the HCPI agenda so far can be counted as a success. What makes the HCPI development plan successful? and can the elements that make the initiative so successful be applied elsewhere in city redevelopment? are questions to be discussed below.

HCPI was first conceived in 2010, prompted by an External Affairs and Community Engagement Committee created by the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Board of Trustees. JHU launched HCPI in 2011 and brought in a consultant to engage the community in a many-months effort with the goal of identifying methods for creating a more attractive community.³ With the formal launch of HCPI, JHU announced a \$10 million pledge to launch the HCPI agenda⁴ and to be spent over five years.⁵ HCPI would not exist without the backing from an anchor institution like JHU, but one of the other major factors in the HCPI progress are its consultants and partners: McNeely Legal Services and Central Baltimore Partnership (CBP), a non-profit organization that exists to promote the betterment of central Balti-

1. Joseph B. McNeely, *Homewood Community Partners Initiative: A Call to Action Findings and Recommendations* (July 2, 2012), <http://president.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/HCPI-Report-mod-1-2-2013.pdf>.

2. *Id.* at 4.

3. *Id.*

4. *Anchor Initiatives: Homewood Community Partners Initiative*, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIV., <http://president.jhu.edu/anchor-initiatives/homewood-community-partners-initiative/> (last visited Nov. 19, 2015).

5. *Id.*

more, along with a wide variety of other partner organizations.⁶ CBP was founded in 2006⁷ and worked on a variety of projects and programs before adopting the HCPI initiative as its own agenda. Thereafter, CBP committed to engage the community in the HCPI neighborhoods and to help design the issues to be addressed by HCPI, including starting with 37 recommended programs.⁸ Since the first agenda was envisioned, CBP and HCPI have narrowed the focus and chosen four key areas to target as part of the agenda: public safety and quality of life, housing creation and blight removal, public education, and retail and commercial development.⁹ In conjunction with those four areas HCPI plans to augment the agenda with targeted local hiring and purchasing.¹⁰ By targeting these areas, HCPI is set up to approach redevelopment with a holistic methodology. Rather than targeting only one issue at a time, HCPI attempts to bolster all aspects that contribute to neighborhood redevelopment.

II. Background

A. *What Is HCPI?*

HCPI is made up of ten neighborhoods¹¹ and one business district in central Baltimore.¹² The neighborhoods extend from University Parkway above JHU to the north and down Charles Street to Mount Royal Ave at the University of Baltimore to the south.¹³ Further, the footprint borders Greenmount Avenue in the east and Keswick Avenue in the west.¹⁴ One of the unique physical aspects of HCPI is the proximity to three universities: JHU, the University of Baltimore, and the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). These three universities are either within or border HCPI. One of the positive aspects of having three unique universities (a research university, a public university, and an arts college) within or on the footprint of the HCPI is that they each have interests in investing in their neighborhood and Baltimore City in general. By improving neighborhoods surrounding

6. *About Us: The Central Baltimore Partnership's Mission*, CENT. BALT. P'SHIP, <http://www.centralbaltimore.org/about-us/> (last visited Nov. 15, 2015).

7. *Id.*

8. McNeely, *supra* note 1, at 2.

9. *Our Agenda - HCPI Agenda*, CENT. BALT. P'SHIP, <http://www.centralbaltimore.org/our-work/our-agenda-hcpi-agenda/> (last visited Nov. 15, 2015).

10. McNeely, *supra* note 1, at 4.

11. *Id.* at 2. (stating the neighborhoods as "Abell, Barclay, Charles North, Charles Village, Greenmount West, Harwood, Okenshaw, Old Goucher, Remington, Wyman Park, and Greenmount Avenue's Main Street District.").

12. JOHNS HOPKINS UNIV., *supra* note 4.

13. *10 Neighborhoods + 1 Commercial District*, CENT. BALT. P'SHIP, <http://www.centralbaltimore.org/central-baltimore/neighborhoods/> (last visited Nov. 16, 2015).

14. *Id.*

their campuses, each school is better equipped to draw in students, faculty, and donors.¹⁵

Another aspect that makes HCPI unique is the number of partners it has.¹⁶ HCPI not only has a connection to each neighborhood association and is connected to the 10 neighborhoods in its footprint, but also the HCPI task force is made up of representatives from 17 unique institutions.¹⁷ HCPI has also done well at harnessing the power of existing community organizations, such as Strong City Baltimore, an organization which has an existing agenda to target central Baltimore neighborhoods and support their development.¹⁸ Strong City Baltimore, having done work in central Baltimore for decades, is uniquely situated to address the housing blight and public safety portions of the HCPI agenda via their strategic code enforcement plan which partners with Baltimore Housing to abate properties that impact the neighborhood.¹⁹ HCPI has leveraged existing non-profit capital to boost the HCPI agenda and neighborhoods resulting in a higher and more beneficial impact. Additionally, CBP has engaged a steering committee made up of 17 representatives from institutions in central Baltimore and across the City, such as the Goldseker Foundation and Downtown Partnership of Baltimore.²⁰ The number of partners not only diversifies the ideas and creativity presented but also extends the network of organizations to help bolster the communities. HCPI acts as the glue that binds existing organizations and works to ensure that disparate organizations are working in parallel and targeting area financing in a coordinated way.

HCPI is currently heavily involved in 29 projects that fit within the original five-fold target areas set out in the original plan, which includes attracting 3,000 more households and \$1 billion of capital investments by 2022.²¹ The projects currently underway cover a wide

15. *A New Start for Hopkins in the Community*, BALT. SUN (Dec. 8, 2012), http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2012-12-08/news/bs-ed-hopkins-20121208_1_community-betterment-grants-anchor-institutions-johns-hopkins-university. Strong neighborhoods around campus will make it easier to attract and retain top-quality faculty and students, and Hopkins' competitor institutions are already doing the same thing. *Id.*

16. *HCPI Bullet Points Archive*, CENT. BALT. P'SHIP, <http://www.centralbaltimore.org/cbp-news/hcpi-bullet-points/> (last visited Nov. 16, 2015).

17. *Our Work: HCPI Task Force*, CENT. BALT. P'SHIP, <http://www.centralbaltimore.org/our-work/task-force/hcpi/> (last visited Nov. 16, 2015).

18. *Economic Development*, STRONG CITY BALT., <http://www.greaterhomewood.org/about-us/neighborhoods/economic-development/> (last visited Jan. 15, 2016).

19. *Id.*

20. *Fiscal Year 2015: A Landmark for HCPI Progress!*, CENT. BALT. P'SHIP, available at <http://www.centralbaltimore.org/cbp-news/hcpi-bullet-points> ("It is the mission of the Steering Committee to support and build on existing efforts and organizations – not to replace or overpower them").

21. JOHNS HOPKINS UNIV., *supra* note 4.

swath of areas and topics.²² All projects are targeted at improving the HCPI footprint but not solely devoted to real property improvements.²³ Projects include improving security and resident access cards in the J Van Story Building, new Art and STEM programs at Barclay and Margret Brent Schools, and two-way street conversion.²⁴ There are also real property changes happening within the HCPI footprint, including the opening of the 29th Street Community Center, the beginning of development for 25th Street Station, the Stavros Niarchos Parkway Theater being under construction rehabilitation, and the Centre Theater opening its doors in 2015 after getting fully rehabbed.²⁵

B. Where does the money come from?

HCPI was originally funded by JHU with a commitment of \$10 million over the first five years of the initiative and a plan that JHU's investments would leverage an additional \$60 million of investments.²⁶ However, the funding for the initiative appears to extend far beyond the initial funding provided by JHU. For instance, the Stavros Niarchos Parkway Theater is named after the foundation that donated \$5 million to rehabilitate an historic theater in partnership with MICA and the Maryland Film Festival, which created movie screening and learning spaces along with permanent offices for the Maryland Film Festival.²⁷ The Parkway Theater also received \$125,000 from CBP in the form of a Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Initiative (BRNI) grant.²⁸ Those two contributions make up only a piece of the \$15 million required to rehab the theater in full.²⁹ The economic impact of the Film Festival on Baltimore City remains unclear, but the hope is that it will generate economic activity in the Station North Arts districts and help style Baltimore as a film travel destination making the

22. *Id.*

23. *Id.*

24. *Two-way Traffic Conversion Becomes a Hot Topic*, CENT. BALT. P'SHIP, available at http://www.centralbaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/BulletPoints_2nd-issue-Feb2015-Screen-Version.pdf/.

25. Dennis O'Shea, *Stavros Niarchos Foundation gives \$5M to Johns Hopkins for film center*, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIV. HUB (Oct. 20, 2014), <http://hub.jhu.edu/2014/10/20/parkway-gift-stavros-niarchos>.

26. JOHNS HOPKINS UNIV., *supra* note 4; McNeely, *supra* note 1, at 4.

27. O'Shea, *supra* note 25.

28. *Id.*; *Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Initiative (BRNI) Project Fact Sheet*, CENT. BALT. P'SHIP, <http://www.centralbaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/brni-project-faq.pdf> (last visited Mar. 2, 2016) ("This project will remove an eyesore and create a vibrant destination at one of Baltimore's most important intersections.")

29. Ed Gunts, *Parkway Theatre turns 100, passes \$15M mark in renovation funds*, BALT. BREW (Oct. 24, 2015, 11:56AM), <https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2015/10/24/parkway-theatre-turns-100-passes-15m-mark-in-renovation-funds/>.

Parkway and Maryland Film Festival a sound investment with a longer-term impact that reaches well beyond the HCPI's five goals.³⁰

The Parkway Theater is only one small piece in the greater HCPI planning, and when the funding piece is examined in depth it gets more complex. The Parkway model seems to be a good starting place to target and invest in a capital project or real property project in order to leverage interest in the area and other donors. The initial JHU commitment has been able to leverage a number of other funding sources. The HCPI Development Fund was created to assist in the management of the \$10 million from JHU, and is managed by The Reinvestment Fund (TRF).³¹ The State of Maryland has also committed \$4.5 million to HCPI,³² including \$150,000 received by CBP in March 2014 in the form of Community Legacy grants for two capital projects.³³ In January 2015, TRF received funding from the Kresge and Surdna Foundations through a grant agreement that helps fund communities through organizations like TRF.³⁴ The \$200,000 that was granted to TRF is part of a grant program, *Catalyzing Culture and Community through CDFIs*, which targets community development financial institutions (CDFI) that are involved in revitalization integrated with arts and culture.³⁵ Following the backing from an anchor institution³⁶ like JHU, the money seems to keep flowing from all sides. According to the JHU president, the hope was that the JHU funding of the project (and thus the JHU backing) would attract another \$50 million in funding from other sources.³⁷ As of March 2015, JHU has distributed

30. Mark R. Smith, *Q&A With Maryland Film Festival Director Jed Dietz*, BUS. MONTHLY (May 2, 2011), <http://www.bizmonthly.com/qa-with-maryland-film-festival-director-jed-dietz/>.

31. Kurt Sommer, *Baltimore Integration Partnership Update - March 2015*, ADVENTURES IN PHIL. BLOG (Mar. 26, 2015, updated Apr. 2, 2015), <http://www.abagrantmakers.org/blogpost/610570/212238/Baltimore-Integration-Partnership-Update-March-2015>.

32. *Id.*

33. *Community Legacy Award Announced*, CENT. BALT. P'SHIP (Mar. 11, 2015) available at <http://hosted.verticalresponse.com/770839/23acdf3ef8/TEST/TEST/>.

34. *TRF receives \$200,000 grant to integrate arts, culture, and creativity into revitalization work*, REINVESTMENT FUN (Jan. 9, 2015), <http://www.trfund.com/trf-receives-200000-grant-to-integrate-arts-culture-and-creativity-into-revitalization-work/>.

35. *Id.*

36. Anchor institutions are generally defined as having heavy investments in their location, either due to real property investments, customers, or natural resources that making relocation unlikely. Large universities are, for the most part, considered anchor institutions as they are not mobile entities and generally look for long-term planning to sustain its own existence in whichever community it is.

37. Fern Shen and Mark Reutter, *Hopkins takes on neighborhood building in its own hood*, BALT. BREW (Dec. 7, 2012 at 10:26AM), <https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2012/12/07/hopkins-takes-on-neighborhood-building-in-its-own-hood/> ("We hope to attract \$50 million of additional investment," Daniels

\$2.6 million of funding, leveraging \$16 million in other commitments, which indicates that the plan seems to be working.³⁸ Additionally, JHU has promised a funding commitment parallel to any funds it can leverage up to \$60 million, but that is just the JHU piece of the HCPI puzzle. Other institutions which are participating in HCPI are leveraging their own set of monetary commitments. With that in mind, the commitments to HCPI could expand well beyond the millions of dollars and into the billions before the initiative reaches completion.

III. Analysis

In order to fully understand why HCPI is considered successful, it is worth examining previous attempts at economic development across Baltimore. It seems that there is something both unique about economic development in Baltimore and about HCPI. Two economic development projects in particular are the East Baltimore Development Incorporated project in the neighborhood of Middle East and the project in the neighborhood of Sandtown-Winchester. At least so far, HCPI does not seem to be falling into the same patterns that previous economic development efforts have.

A. *Economic Development in Other Parts of Baltimore*

In particular, it is difficult to examine HCPI without thinking about JHU's other major economic development project, the East Baltimore Development Incorporated (EBDI). Similar to HCPI, JHU is only one player, though a big one, in EBDI, which targets development in 88 acres spanning the Middle East neighborhood. Since its founding in 2003, EBDI has been mired in lack of development, community anger, and even litigation. Twelve years after its establishment, Middle East and EBDI are finally seeing some of the originally planned changes come to fruition: houses are being demolished and rebuilt, a new hotel is beginning construction, and buildings originally planned for a science and technology park are finished with tenants moving in.³⁹ One of the biggest focuses of the project has been Elmer A. Henderson, a Johns Hopkins Partnership School (Henderson-Hopkins),⁴⁰ which broke ground in 2012 and opened its doors to students in Janu-

said, speaking to a crowd that included many of the neighborhood partners hoping to share in the University's largess.").

38. *\$40 million first phase of Seawall Development's Remington's Row underway*, ENTERPRISE (Mar. 9, 2015), <http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/news-and-events/new-releases/remington-row-phase-one>.

39. *EBDI Projects: 2015*, E. BALT. DEV. INC., <http://www.ebdi.org/construction-update> (last visited Jan. 15, 2106).

40. *Henderson-Hopkins Opens Its Doors*, JOHNS HOPKINS SCH. OF EDUC., <http://hendersonhopkins.org/K-8/opening.html> (last visited Jan. 15, 2016).

ary of 2014.⁴¹ Soon after opening the \$42 million school building some members of the community questioned the motive for building a school; to serve the community or create a new community with the appeal of a brand new school?⁴²

One of the most important things to note about the original EBDI plan is that Middle East development was launched with the use of eminent domain exercised by the Baltimore City government to transfer a portion of the real property to EBDI.⁴³ The use of eminent domain has played a major role in both the community perception of JHU's involvement in east Baltimore and the redevelopment of Middle East in general.⁴⁴ Some residents claim to have found out about the EBDI eminent domain plan in an article published in the Baltimore Sun, and the community quickly formed a community group, the Save Middle East Action Committee (SMEAC), to battle the impending government takeover.⁴⁵ SMEAC is largely cited for having negotiated fairer deals for the housing stock in Middle East but even so, a decade later, some of the agreed upon demands have not come to fruition.⁴⁶ While there are many factors that have contributed to the lengthy and largely negatively perceived development via EBDI, it is worth noting that it all started off on a very different foot than HCPI. Instead of beginning on the project by including the community, EBDI was launched by attempting to get the existing community out of the neighborhood rather than engage in the development of it.

Another redevelopment project in Baltimore occurred some years ago on the West side of the City in the neighborhood known as Sandtown-Winchester (Sandtown). Sandtown, a 72-block neighborhood, has long been considered a depressed and blighted neighborhood with little hope of improvement.⁴⁷ In 1989, unlike the plan in Middle East but in a similar tactic to HCPI, local leaders of Sandtown combined efforts with local non-profits, community leaders, and developers to come up with a comprehensive approach to redevelop the

41. Erica L. Green, *East Baltimore students start New Year in new school*, BALT. SUN (Jan. 2, 2014 at 7:31PM), <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-henderson-hopkins-opening-20140102-story.html>.

42. *Id.*

43. Lorraine Mirabella, *High court upholds eminent domain*, BALT. SUN (Jun. 24, 2005), http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2005-06-24/news/0506240015_1-eminent-domain-baltimore-development-east-baltimore.

44. Matthew Schwarzfeld, *Baltimore: What The NYT Didn't See Fit to Print*, ROOFLINES.ORG (Aug. 19, 2008), http://www.rooflines.org/1070/baltimore_what_the_nyt_didnt_see_fit_to_print/.

45. Joan Jacobson, *Book on Hopkins redevelopment by a leader of the opposition*, BALT. BREW (Feb. 19, 2013 at 11:33AM), <https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2013/02/19/book-on-hopkins-redevelopment-by-a-leader-of-the-opposition/>.

46. *Id.*

47. Yvonne Wegner, *Saving Sandtown-Winchester: decade-long, multimillion-dollar investment questioned*, BALT. SUN (May 10, 2015), <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/west-baltimore/bs-md-ci-sandtown-winchester-blight-20150510-story.html>.

neighborhood.⁴⁸ The plan was to invest in new homes, new curriculum in local schools, and job training for residents.⁴⁹ In the first 10 years of the project an estimated \$130 million of public-private investments were made into housing rehabilitation,⁵⁰ and even more money was invested in the other more holistic aspects of the project.⁵¹ However, 16 years later in 2015, following the Baltimore City unrest, Sandtown got a closer look and analyses have been mixed. While homeownership rates increased and poverty level decreased, and unemployment rates increased and medium income decreased, nearby neighborhoods have outpaced Sandtown in improvements.⁵²

Yet, Sandtown is still seen as two neighborhoods in one.⁵³ Homes that were newly constructed in the 1990s and sold by one of the original investors into the neighborhood, The Enterprise Foundation, have remained occupied and maintained. However, vacant buildings and blight also remain and the neighborhood's population has decreased by thousands in the past 20 years.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the original investments into the area did not draw more investors to leverage commitments to the Sandtown area. Much like Middle East, Sandtown has a long and complex neighborhood history that cannot be summarized easily, but at first glance the redevelopment plan as originally imagined has turned out to be a sound failure despite the large amounts of monetary and human investments to start. The University of Baltimore president and former Baltimore City mayor, Kurt Schmoke, made an important point about Sandtown: "some of the problems afflicting Sandtown-Winchester never disappeared."⁵⁵ That appears to be the exact type of issue that HCPI is setting out to address in each of its neighborhoods.

B. HCPI in Comparison

HCPI seems to have learned lessons from its redevelopment predecessors. HCPI spent the first year working with the community in its neighborhoods to come up with an agenda everyone could agree on, or at least agree to agree on.⁵⁶ It seems the mantra of HCPI is an agree to agree plan with each stakeholder in the initiative working

48. *Id.*

49. *Id.*

50. Housing rehabilitation was concentrated in only one area of Sandtown and was mainly generated via The Enterprise Foundation, founded by the Rouse Company. *See id.*

51. Wegner, *supra* note 47.

52. *Id.*

53. Spence Lean, *Sandtown Winchester: A Tale of Two Cities*, BALTIMOREFUTURE.BLOGSPOT.COM (Dec. 15, 2012 at 11:33AM), <http://baltimorefuture.blogspot.com/2012/12/gilmor-homes-elephant-in-room.html>.

54. Wegner, *supra* note 47.

55. *Id.*

56. McNeely, *supra* note 1, at 4.

together toward a common goal. In stark contrast to EBDI, HCPI has involved the community from the beginning of the process, creating community involvement and, more importantly, community investment into the project.⁵⁷ While the monetary investments are important, the HCPI community investment could turn out to be far more important. In November 2015, JHU Whiting School of Engineering announced a \$5 million and ten-year partnership with Barclay Middle and Elementary School to run an engineering lab making Barclay an attractive STEM school,⁵⁸ an effort to bolster the HCPI further.⁵⁹

Additionally, while HCPI is clearly a JHU created project, the willingness of CBP to carry the agenda forward is an important step in the development process. Instead of JHU stepping into the surrounding communities to force change, CBP, a known entity, is working with its neighbors to effect change.⁶⁰ HCPI is not moving anyone out, although the initiative has yet to show if any residents will get displaced by rising house prices or cost of living. The buffer that surrounds the HCPI agenda is the local hiring and purchasing efforts, which the Johns Hopkins Enterprise has encouraged as part of the HopkinsLocal initiative.⁶¹ While the HopkinsLocal initiative is a plan to build, hire, and buy in Baltimore, a portion of its target neighborhoods include the HCPI footprint.⁶² While the HopkinsLocal is a piece in the larger efforts to effect positive change across Baltimore, it also fits nicely with the HCPI agenda and adds another layer to the development project.⁶³

In strong contrast to the 1980s plan in Sandtown, HCPI is specifically targeted to leverage further investments. While additional funding has certainly been invested in the neighborhood of Sandtown, the original capital was not enough to leverage continued investments and commitments in a way that brought long-term positive change. HCPI is attempting to effect change by combining human and community investments, similar to what exists in Sandtown, with the mon-

57. Dennis O'Shea, *Johns Hopkins to Give \$10M to Homewood-area Projects*, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIV. HUB (Dec. 6, 2012), <http://hub.jhu.edu/2012/12/06/homewood-community-announcement>

58. *Barclay Elementary/Middle School Partnership: Vision*, JOHNS HOPKINS WHITING SCH. OF ENG'G, <http://engineering.jhu.edu/outreach/get-involved/barclay-elementarymiddle-school-partnership/>.

59. Erica L. Green, *Hopkins Opens New Engineering Lab in City Elementary School*, BALT. SUN (Nov. 12, 2015), <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/bs-md-ci-barclay-engineering-20151111-story.html>.

60. Karen Stokes, *Letter to the Editor: Taking Pride in Baltimore*, NY TIMES (Oct. 27, 2015), http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/27/opinion/taking-pride-in-baltimore.html?_r=0.

61. *For a Stronger Baltimore*, HOPKINSLOCAL, <http://hopkinslocal.jhu.edu/> (last visited Jan. 15, 2016).

62. *Id.*

63. *JHU president a guest on Dan Rodricks' 'Roughly Speaking' podcast*, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIV. HUB (Nov. 10, 2015), <http://hub.jhu.edu/2015/11/10/daniels-roughly-speaking-podcast>.

etary investments of EBDI. In addition, HCPI attempts to combine the monetary investments by asking the community to leverage additional commitments beyond what one anchor institution is doing. By spreading the investment to MICA and UB, as well as the individuals in the community, HCPI not only disburses the commitment required but also creates an investment opportunity that large numbers of people and institutions do not want to see fail.

IV. Conclusion

Three years into the project, HCPI is making progress. The holistic approach to community redevelopment now appears to be the most successful comprehensive Baltimore development initiative to date. While there are many years to go, HCPI seems to be off to a really good start. There are questions that remain regarding how successful the initiative will be in the long term and, maybe more importantly, if this is a holistic method that can be applied elsewhere. HCPI has not been in existence long enough to know if this comprehensive approach to neighborhood development is a successful one. The preliminary projects are making positive waves in central Baltimore, and HCPI seems to show only positive things to come for Baltimore.