



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake  
Mayor



Thomas J. Stosur  
Director of Planning

---

## Arundel + Cherry Hill INSPIRE Meeting Notes (3/22/16, 4/28/16 & 6/28/16)

The Department of Planning held two INSPIRE kick-off meetings (March 22<sup>nd</sup> and April 16) and a workshop on June 28th. These are the suggestions from these three events combined into categories. The majority of the 6/28 workshop was spent discussing three stories that illustrated three different snapshots of what “could be” 10 years from now in Cherry Hill. These stories were based on trends or conditions in the neighborhood; however, they represent what **could be** and not necessarily **what will be**. The discussion was meant to help the Department of Planning understand what elements of these stories appeal or don’t appeal to Cherry Hill residents and stakeholders in order to guide future investments. The stories can be found at the end of this document.

### **Community Cohesion**

- There are strong family and community ties in the neighborhood
- Residents have pride in the neighborhood and its history; successful residents
- Strong community organizations
- Strong and engaged faith-based community (mentor at schools, have health fairs, prayer walks, focus on healthy foods, etc.)
- Consider the needs of senior citizens
- There are good collaborations between community organizations and the schools
- There is a desire for improvement and growth
- Residents feel a sense of possibilities
- Lots of great leaders from the community – install plaques to showcase leaders/success stories to inspire children
- Cherry Hill is a “real community” with defined borders
- Cherry Hill is a “city within a city”
- Cherry Hill is the “best kept secret” in Baltimore
- Lack of participation in community concerns; get people involved in the variety of things going on
- Need more effective communication about what’s happening/opportunities for people to be involved
- Create “one voice” –currently there’s no power because there’s no unity among community partners/churches/neighborhood stakeholders

## ***Community Assets***

- The family health center and hospital are assets
- Police station
- There is a library
- Port Covington: create a Human Resource center in Cherry Hill – leverage the incentives they're getting from the City to benefit the neighborhood.
- Casino money – this is relatively flexible

## ***Transportation***

- Connections to the neighborhood is OK/there are transportation options – light rail, buses
- Cherry Hill is a walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood
- Bumpy roads and sidewalks; streets are in poor condition
- Walking paths needed
- Crosswalks improved for safety – Round Road in front of the school
- High speed cars + children = unsafe conditions – especially on Round Road, around the schools, and around the Town Center; need traffic calming, like speed bumps
- Create traffic roundabout at Cherry Hill and Cherryland intersection (instead of lights)
- Public transportation needs improvement – need to increase ridership; need better access between light rail and Cherry Hill
  - There is a planned reduction of bus service that will negatively impact the neighborhood
- The light rail stop seems unsafe – poorly designed/under tunnel/needs security
  - Drug activity near the light rail
- Expand Circulator route through Cherry Hill to Harbor Hospital connecting to downtown routes
- Improve access to buses; reroute buses to work better
- Expand Sunday transit service – many people work 7 days a week and have trouble getting to work
- Covered bus stops /shelters
- Improve access to the light rail stations – provide a bus or shuttle
  - Many people live closer to the Patapsco light rail stop across the CSX tracks, and walk across the tracks to that stop rather than down the hill to the other stop; it's unsafe to encourage people (especially children) to cross the tracks

## ***Open Space and Recreation***

- The waterfront – the view, the possibilities for recreation, education, etc.
- There is a lot of green – in the neighborhood and in Middle Branch Park
- There are two swimming pools
- There is a recreation center and there is going to be a new rec center
- The Rowing Club is good, although underutilized
- Playground equipment is poorly maintained
- There are not enough places for children to play throughout the neighborhood
- The rec center should teach kids how to swim
- The Rowing Center should teach kids how to row

- Need to improve trails
- Build a fitness center (Note: The new rec center might serve this purpose)

### ***Safety***

- The methadone clinic behind Arundel Elementary – patrons cut through Arundel school blacktop to get into the woods
- The area around the school (Cherry Hill) is safe
- Make the area around the light rail station safer
- C.O.P/Safe Streets/partnership with police
- Concerned about gang violence
- Don't like midnight basketball – kids should have a curfew
- Keep kids out of jail/partner with police

### ***Businesses***

- Cherry Hill is a food desert – need an affordable grocery store/food market (former markets have failed)
- There is a lack of businesses, including a bank, clothing stores, post office, movie theater
- There is a lack of restaurants
- Need for a name-brand food chain (e.g. , Subway)
- Unique mix of stores/local entrepreneurs/community-based stores desired
- Incubators – like City Garage but for retail
- Benches/public spaces in Town Center
- Have an Advisory Board for tenant selection of local businesses

### ***Education/Schools***

- Bring the families between schools together before opening day
- With the division of grade levels at Arundel (pre-K– 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Cherry Hill (3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>), many families will likely walk between the two schools to drop-off and pick-up children.
- Safety and streets (walking to school) – need better lighting/sidewalks. Kids want to walk, but younger kids may not feel safe
- Mentoring programs; paid senior citizen mentors/tutors for elementary schools
- Boys/girls clubs, after-school programs to keep kids busy from 3-6 p.m.; help middle school students see alternatives/shift attitudes; homework time/prepare kids for tests – what students need for achievement
- Expansion of Head Start
- Unmet needs of students are concerning – social/emotional aspects including chronic absences and lack of parent involvement; help families to better participate in getting children prepared; need to help families flourish.

### ***Housing/Land Use***

- Upgrade the housing stock
- There is some vacancy

- Vacant public housing units are dangerous and have trespassers
- Some of public housing units are infested
- How are concerns of public housing residents addressed?
- Need larger housing units – most are too small to accommodate the size of families living in the neighborhood
- Mixed-income housing – there are renters in the neighborhood who want to buy in the neighborhood, but will leave if there's no stock
- Resources for first-time home buyers needed
- Reuse of properties
- Would like to see a mix of stores along Reedbird Avenue
- What's the waterfront view going to be like if Port Covington doesn't have a height restriction? Our views of downtown could be blocked
- If families move into new housing near the waterfront, concern that new families might not send their kids to neighborhood schools; in general, existing community may not be supported by new residents
- Concerns about increase in cost of living in neighborhood

### ***Employment and Workforce Development***

- There are no local jobs
- Employment needed through business development
- Job training programs and placement of residents, esp. for Under Armour & MedStar
- Concern about people not qualifying for jobs because of past convictions

### ***Health/Food Access***

- Health facility – make available on weekends
- Fruits and vegetables important, but should be affordable
- The need for a supermarket and good access is raised at every meeting
- Farms stand here now; love idea of green house or farmers' market; do residents buy the produce in Fisher's Cove garden?
- Improve accessibility of community gardens to buy vegetables (more times of the week); make cost more affordable
- Decrease number of fast food restaurants

### ***Code Enforcement***

- Overgrown lots needs to be maintained
  - Including large lots near the pool (Note: some of these might be a part of the park)

### ***Image/Marketing***

- Don't like "distressed" label – leads to eminent domain and less policing
- Partner with different media to show the positive things in the community and schools
- Community newsletter
- Lots of great leaders from the community – install plaques to showcase leaders/success stories to inspire children

---

## CHERRY HILL 2.0

Sarah Trini traverses a multiuse path leading from Middle Branch Park into the heart of Cherry Hill. She lingers for a moment to read a historical sign that dots the sidewalk—a sign she’s passed a million times but never stopped to study. The sign has a map of notable historic sites within Cherry Hill, and it reads, “Cherry Hill was one of the first planned suburbs in the United States” and recounts its long history through 2016, when the signs were installed.

Sarah’s realtor called Cherry Hill “the last frontier of Baltimore” when she first showed Sarah her one-bedroom condo overlooking the Patapsco River that she now calls home. Sarah, who moved to Cherry Hill to be closer to her job at Under Armour in Port Covington, was drawn to Cherry Hill’s waterfront location and parks. Each weekday, Sarah drives a quick 10 minutes across the Hanover Street Bridge—a much shorter commute than when she was living in Mount Washington. And her realtor was right in another respect: Cherry Hill is hip, too.

At Under Armour, Sarah works with a few Cherry Hill residents—Maryanne, George, and Andrew—who have lived in Cherry Hill nearly their entire lives. Maryanne often greets Sarah with stories about her son Darius, proudly recounting how he graduated from the transportation program at the Maritime Industries Academy last spring. He now works as an air-traffic controller at BWI Airport. Darius still lives with Maryanne in a small enclave of homeowners near Cherry Hill Road, although he’s looking for his own place. Ideally, Darius would like to stay close to his family in Cherry Hill, but studios in Cherry Hill rent for as much as \$1,200 a month. Instead, Darius is looking for a place closer to BWI, where he’ll be able to get more space for less money.

Maryanne enjoys working at Under Armour—mostly because of her short commute from Cherry Hill. For a long time, she commuted nearly four hours a day (two hours there, two hours back by public transit) as a home health aide near Towson. Now, she commutes only 30 minutes, riding the bus across the Hanover Street Bridge. Maryanne was placed through Cherry Hill Community Coalition’s Human Capital Committee—which works diligently to place local residents in two job training and placement programs for residents: Under Armour’s Ready, Set, Jobs! program and MedStar Harbor’s HealthStart program. But as soon as the committee places a person, the committee receives another four or five new placement requests. Demand has always been high for quality jobs in Cherry Hill, but the committee thinks higher rents and home values—and the need for higher wages to keep up—drive this demand. The committee’s focus now is getting as many residents as possible placed in available jobs rather addressing higher housing costs.

Even with an influx of new residents and local shops, basic needs still go unmet among some Cherry Hill residents. These needs are largely invisible to newer residents like Sarah. But Principal Katos at Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School and Mrs. Day, a second-grade teacher at Arundel Elementary School, see the effects of unmet needs firsthand among their students. More than 90 percent of students at these two schools receive free or reduced lunch and chronic absences and suspensions are still prevalent. Speaking to parents during a PTA meeting, Principal Katos seems hopeful these students will catch up (and quickly!). He’s observing slow but steady increases in students meeting “proficient” or “advanced” performance on standardized tests and new resources within the school that didn’t exist 10 years ago. The principal credits the expansion of HeadStart at several local churches, which receives annual support from the local philanthropic community, as a key part of this success.



*New development brings more residents, businesses, and amenities to Cherry Hill.*

*But without a coordinated effort focused on longtime residents, basic needs still go unmet.*



*In the past 10 years, Cherry Hill has attracted new investment, like a grocery store and renovated town center.*

*In general, improvement has been slow—largely the result of strong partnerships and neighborhood leadership.*

## INCREMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES

Alma Burns sits on a bench in the back of Cherry Hill Senior Manor, reading the headline of an article in *The Baltimore Sun*: “Slow, but steady progress in Cherry Hill, thanks to 1CH.” The article calls 1CH, a local initiative among community-based, governmental, and private-sector partners to align and direct their resources in ways that support Cherry Hill residents, “a model to bring new development to a distressed community.”

Alma thinks about how much Cherry Hill changed since she moved to the neighborhood in 1965—and how much local residents have driven these changes, like those involved in 1CH. 1CH formed out of recognition among community leaders, like Phil and Derek, that in order to bring new development to Cherry Hill—a longstanding goal among residents—they would need to focus on a few key priorities and act opportunistically to achieve them.

Phil was inspired to help build a more coordinated effort with other organizations after the neighborhood experienced some large-scale public investments about 10 years ago. Baltimore City Public Schools renovated Cherry Hill and Arundel schools. The City upgraded sidewalks, added lighting and trees throughout the neighborhood, and built new recreation facilities, including a new rec center, behind Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School. New health facilities were located at the school, bringing a steady stream of people to the area after school hours and on weekends.

Over the past 10 years, 1CH accomplished two major “wins.” It organized a capital campaign to completely renovate and reconfigure Cherry Hill Town Center into a public gathering space, creating a true neighborhood center. The capital campaign—largely led by Catholic Charities—raised more than \$15 million from private and philanthropic sources to add a small-business incubator as part of an expanded Pratt library and new public plaza to the town center.

It also attracted—with the help of the City’s Food Desert Incentive and philanthropic support—a grocery store to locate in the neighborhood. 1CH collaborated with Baltimore Development Corporation to assist with outreach to potential grocery stores after MedStar Harbor Hospital donated part of its property.

Despite coordination, progress on other fronts has been slow. New local businesses pop up in Cherry Hill somewhat haphazardly, the result of a one-time infusion of capital from the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood and Economic Development. Planning discussions continue to focus on Cherry Hill’s potential, although few longstanding projects, such as Fishers’ Cove, materialize.

Property owners make few visible improvements to their properties. With low housing values, the neighborhood draws more low-income households to locate there, reinforcing negative perceptions about Cherry Hill among outsiders. Longtime residents, like Alma, think stories about crime and gang violence keep new people and businesses out.

Driven by the concerns of local public housing residents, 1CH also engaged the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) about ways to improve the large number of public housing units it owns within Cherry Hill. At recent meeting, Andres, a member of Cherry Hill Community Coalition’s Healthy Living Committee, approached MedStar Harbor Hospital with two new project ideas: a green and healthy housing initiative at Cherry Hill Homes

*Story continued on back.*

---

and an active living program to host walking groups for seniors and midnight basketball tournaments for youth. While some staff at the hospital seemed interested in these projects, the anchor institution mostly focuses on delivering health services, including operating a mobile health clinic and providing screenings at the new health facility in Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School.

Even though progress has been sluggish at times, through partnership, Cherry Hill is well-positioned to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

---



*Cherry Hill has transformed into a waterfront destination for new residents and development.*

*A common vision and strong local leadership has helped create opportunities for long-time residents.*

## COMMON GROUND

Young families and older couples leisurely stroll along a new walking path that connects Middle Branch Park and Cherry Hill Town Center, stopping at the town center. They peer into an eclectic mix of stores: thrift stores, barber shops, and a storefront that reads “Urban Agriculture” in its window—an indoor greenhouse that serves as a learning space for neighborhood children through a partnership with Catholic Charities, MedStar Harbor Hospital, and Baltimore City Public Schools.

Yolanda Flood, a ten-year old who has lived on Round Road for her whole life, excitedly waits for the visitors to peruse the produce at her stand in front of the greenhouse, where she is selling surplus vegetables. When Yolanda was very young, she would accompany her older sister and mother to the nearby Pratt Library, where she would see the woman who lives down the street that looks like Grandma and the little boy from her Sunday School class. Now, she still (just barely) recognizes the little boy from her Sunday School class, but she also sees a mix of people she can’t place: young men and women; older people who tell her how they walked from a big apartment building near the light rail station; and kids that don’t go to her school. By the end of the evening, as the farmers’ market draws to close, the visitors bought all of her spinach, kale, and tomatoes. Yolanda feels great—another fun night with her neighbors!

Yolanda’s mother Evette drives them home, even though they live a short walk from the town center. As Evette parks her car in her driveway, she waves to her neighbor, Michelle, doing some gardening across the street. Michelle moved next door two years ago with her son Sam. Yolanda and Sam both attend Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School and play soccer at the rec center behind the school. In fact, that’s where Evette and Michelle originally met, on the sidelines of the ball field. The field was a welcome addition completed about 10 years ago soon after Cherry Hill and Arundel were modernized as part of the 21st Century Schools program. It serves as a gathering place for old and new residents on Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons.

These new improvements—walking paths, community gardens, and new small businesses—are a few examples of successful projects that emerged during the last decade due to the tireless efforts and commitment of several local partners. Together, these partnerships prioritized directing future development in ways that benefit longtime Cherry Hill residents. This commitment was especially important as large tracts of vacant land, such as Fishers’ Cove and recently demolished public housing properties, were privately redeveloped into mixed-use apartment buildings with retail shops. Through pooling resources—both monetary and in-kind—and using their collective influence, local partners helped preserve a portion of new units as affordable housing and provided small-business start-up grants to support local entrepreneurs.

With such positive developments spilling past Waterview Avenue and Cherry Hill Road, homeowners—bolstered by funding from the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (with match dollars from local partners)—have begun to make some home and yard improvements. The overall percentage of renters and owners remain somewhat unchanged, but landlords have also made some improvements to their properties to avoid standing out (and code enforcement complaints from new residents).