



stepUP! baltimore VOLUNTEERS FOR CHANGE

BALTIMORE'S CITIES OF SERVICE PLAN
Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Mayor



“Baltimore is a city of assets. We are directly touched and surrounded by vast untapped wealth every single day.”

- Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake

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Message from the Mayor

As a lifelong Baltimore resident, I share with my neighbors a deep abiding love and commitment for this great city and its people. Each day I hear from our citizens, and I am always humbled and amazed at our resilience and our willingness to give back, to stand up and be counted in our communities.

Today the global economic crisis has tested our collective resolve, and across our great nation, has forced all of us to make the most of our resources. Our cities are uniquely positioned to meet this challenge, as cities are where our nation's resources are concentrated: our businesses, nonprofits, cultural institutions, our people.

Baltimore is a city of assets. We are directly touched and surrounded by vast untapped wealth every single day, but it can be hidden in unexpected places: in our family, friends, and neighbors who are in recovery from drug addiction, in our youth who are involved with the juvenile justice system, in our vacant lots that exist as symbols of urban decay.

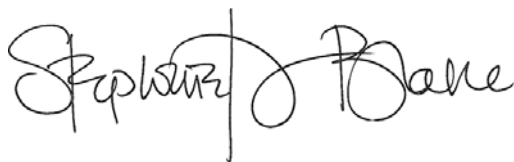
Who will tap into this wealth?

The reality is that many Baltimoreans already have. They have shown us that in the people and the things that are seen as liabilities, there is great treasure that can be harnessed. And they have shown us that Baltimoreans care about each other and care about the city that we all call home.

I believe Baltimore is filled with agents for change. In each person and in every corner of our city, from the least to the most likely of places, we are the agents of change. We are the ones who give back, who help, who volunteer.

Together, we can make our city better, safer and stronger. **stepUP! Baltimore** will do that through impact volunteering, creating a ripple in a few places that over time can become a real tide of change.

I would like to thank the many committed individuals and organizations who helped craft this citywide high-impact service plan, placing us on a path to address our city's pressing local challenges with citizen service. Collaborative effort helped create the vision, and this same collaborative spirit will be called upon to bring it to life in Baltimore. Thank you for your support of volunteerism in our city.



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

Executive Summary

Baltimore is blessed with knowledge and experience in its committed civic leadership, strong philanthropic and business partners, a multitude of nonprofits large and small that work tirelessly to help make life better for those in need, and diverse anchor institutions that stabilize and attract new assets to the city.

stepUP! Baltimore builds on this strong foundation. It recognizes that every Baltimorean has the potential to give of themselves and it will provide them opportunities to realize that potential. It will connect disparate individuals, groups, and communities who otherwise would not have the opportunity to volunteer together to tackle the city's challenges.

Three of the most pressing challenges in Baltimore are drug addiction, crime, and urban blight. To multiply and channel the energy of volunteers to impact these areas:

Recovery Corps will identify, train, and place 100 people who have sustained recovery from addiction into treatment centers as peer recovery advocates—the Recovery Corps—who will provide support to those in recovery. It will also build bridges between individuals in recovery and the larger Baltimore community through shared volunteer service activities.

Supper Club will bring adult Baltimoreans together with youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system to share meals and conversation around the same dinner table in a safe and supportive environment. These youth are making difficult yet hope-filled transitions in their lives, and those who continue Supper Club will step up to volunteer leadership roles.

Power in Dirt will revitalize vacant lots in some of the most blighted areas of the city and change city government to make it easier for residents in these neighborhoods and other volunteers to do this work. This initiative recognizes and builds from existing, successful efforts to revitalize vacant lots by expanding existing efforts and creating new opportunities for more people to get involved.

Baltimore CARES will develop two multidisciplinary service-learning curricula that will engage students in two pilot schools over the course of the school term, to learn about and make an impact on vacant lots and drug addiction. Once developed and implemented, the curricula will be made available to other schools, organizations, and programs seeking to increase student learning and civic engagement.

In addition, **stepUP! Baltimore** is launching a website that will provide information on Recovery Corps, Supper Club, Power in Dirt, and Baltimore CARES. In partnership with Volunteer Central, it will connect residents to volunteer opportunities that address our city's most pressing challenges.

Introduction

About Cities of Service

Founded in New York City on September 10, 2009 by 17 mayors from cities around the nation, Cities of Service is a bipartisan coalition of mayors who have committed to work together to engage citizens in a multi-year effort to address pressing city needs through impact volunteerism. The coalition has rapidly grown since its inception and now includes more than 100 mayors, representing more than 49 million Americans across the nation.

American cities face serious challenges and many mayors want to take advantage of every resource available to them—including the time and energy of public-spirited residents—to address those challenges. But in cities across America today, citizen service is often an underutilized or inefficiently utilized strategy by municipal governments. Cities of Service supports mayors to leverage citizen service strategies, addressing local needs and making government more effective.

All Cities of Service efforts are characterized by a concept called “impact volunteering”—volunteer strategies that target community needs, use best practices, and set clear outcomes and measures to gauge progress.

In June 2010, the City of Baltimore was one of ten cities to receive a Cities of Service Leadership Grant. Funded jointly by Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Rockefeller Foundation, the two-year grants enable cities to hire Chief Service Officers responsible for developing and implementing high-impact service plans.

Methodology

In addition to funding, all Cities of Service Leadership Grant recipients receive technical assistance and support from Cities of Service to develop high-impact service plans. Much of this support follows a methodology outlined in the Cities of Service Playbook.ⁱ

Like all Cities of Service Leadership Grant recipients, Baltimore’s Chief Service Officer first conducted a landscape analysis to identify both the specific challenges the city would address through service and the resources and opportunities available to support the effort. The landscape analysis included:

- Focus groups with hundreds of key stakeholders, including representatives from city agencies, nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, local businesses, foundations, and community associations;
- Expert interviews with dozens of local and national leaders, including Chief Service Officers from cities across the nation; and
- Surveys of volunteer-using nonprofit organizations, city agencies, and K-12 schools, with an additional survey of the general public that received over 400 respondents.

After completing the landscape analysis, the Chief Service Officer developed a unique set of initiatives: “Impact Service Initiatives” to address specific challenges in the city’s priority action areas and “Infrastructure Initiatives” to address cross-cutting service challenges. Close to 100 stakeholders and experts served on work groups that met ten times with the Chief Service Officer over the course of one month to brainstorm, develop, and refine potential initiative ideas.

The Chief Service Officer presented a selection of these ideas to an Advisory Committee of 24 individuals from across the public and private sectors. Committee members provided feedback on priority action areas and potential initiative ideas and made recommendations to the Mayor. In consultation with her senior team and the Chief Service Officer, the Mayor decided on final initiative ideas and the direction in which they should continue to be developed.

Next, the Chief Service Officer worked with key stakeholders to develop metrics to gauge the progress of each initiative and operational plans for implementation.

ⁱThe Cities of Service Playbook is available for download at citiesofservice.org.

Landscape Analysis

The landscape analysis showed that Baltimoreans are most concerned with **drug addiction, crime,** and **urban blight**, which is consistent with the findings of the 2010 Baltimore Citizen Survey, a representative survey conducted annually for the city by the University of Baltimore.¹ The analysis also uncovered some underlying issues. Baltimoreans spoke plainly about the feeling among many citizens that these problems are so intractable that they do not see what they can do to solve them. They also spoke about the geographic, neighborhood, socioeconomic, racial, and other boundaries that separate citizens in the city.

Despite, or because of, these challenges, Baltimoreans maintain a strong faith in the diversity, resiliency, and character of its people and its many neighborhoods. They see its citizens as passionate, tough, proud, friendly, unpretentious, and talkative people who live in neighborhoods with strong networks that give the city a distinctive, small-town feel. **What are Baltimore's strengths? Here is what city residents said in a recent survey:**

"Baltimore is tenacious."

"There is fight here, thus there is HOPE here! I SEE IT! I FEEL IT!"

"People who live here who care deeply about the city; I see them in the news, online, at local businesses, etc. Once this city has you hooked, you're in!"

"Combination of realism and open-mindedness among residents--underlying belief in the city's potential, despite its frustrating challenges."

"There are a lot of very talented caring individuals in our communities. We just need to tap into that wonderful resource."

"The people sticking together to try to keep the city clean, trying to make sure everyone eats and people trying to coach others to stay on the right path to success."

"The sense its citizens have that they live someplace special without romanticizing the problems. The love citizens have for the city"

"Baltimore has a great network of volunteers and, more importantly, concerned citizens that want to address their own needs but need the tools and networks with which to do it."

"Strong communities and residents who are willing to do whatever it takes to make Baltimore better."

"Baltimore has a charming "weirdness," a gritty, unpretentious side that gives people the psychological freedom to be creative."

"The community feeling, the politeness of many people out on the street. There is so much simple goodness despite all of the existing troubles."

"The CITIZENS of this city who's trying in their own ways."

In their own voices, Baltimoreans have identified the good that is already taking place that serves as the antidote both to the feeling that the problems in the city are intractable and to the boundaries that separate Baltimoreans from each other. The antidote is the immense potential, realized and unrealized, of its own people, and the small-town, reach-across-the-fence, help-your-neighbor sensibility that characterizes so many of its communities.

Service in Baltimore

According to Volunteering in America, within the Baltimore Metropolitan Statistical Area (which includes Baltimore and Towson), volunteers contribute an annual 48 hours of service per resident, ranking the area third among 51 large cities, for a total of \$2.1 billion dollars of service contributed.²

In addition, the City of Baltimore encourages Baltimoreans to give back to the community in many ways. Through its annual Combined Charities campaign, City employees contribute about \$1 million to nonprofit organizations that provide vital services in the Baltimore metropolitan area.

In 2010 Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake launched the Baltimore City Mentoring Initiative to match adult mentors with 235 children on Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Maryland's waiting list in eight targeted Baltimore neighborhoods with historically high rates of crime.

In tackling the challenges of drug addiction, crime, and urban blight, **stepUP! Baltimore** recognizes and builds on the good that is already taking place in the city. Two **Action Principles** will guide **stepUP! Baltimore's** initiatives:

- **Affirm that all of us are change agents:** Affirm that every person, especially those seen as liabilities, has the potential to give of themselves and provide them opportunities to realize that potential.
- **Build bridges across boundaries:** Connect disparate individuals, groups, and communities who otherwise would not have the opportunity to meet and learn about each other, and work together to solve problems.

In addition to the specific need areas highlighted above, the landscape analysis showed that Baltimoreans, across the board, are concerned about youth in the city. As a cross-cutting issue, Baltimoreans consistently spoke in interviews and discussions about the need to provide youth the direction and opportunities they need to thrive. **What are Baltimore's concerns about youth? Here is what city residents said in a recent survey:**

"Serving youth is to live. It's like breathing."

"Every child deserves a decent education and the same opportunities afforded to them so they can have successful futures."

"We as adults are responsible for every child we come in contact with, no matter if you are in the grocery store, library, or just on the street. Praise them, talk to them, encourage them. Just one word can make a difference in a child's life."

"I volunteer to give the kids the same great experiences that I had as a kid."

"I want to give back so that our future generation understands that we all must give back."

Youth can be change agents and solutions to problems, if given the opportunity, and if prepared to succeed in that opportunity. One way to address this is through **service-learning**. Specifically, Baltimoreans agreed that service-learning can be further strengthened and holds immense promise for not only improving learning outcomes, but also cultivating a future generation of leaders committed to tackling the city's most pressing challenges.

stepUP! baltimore service plan



Recovery Corps People in Recovery Giving Back

“If I could turn back seven years, and do things differently, I would. If I could help somebody in recovery with that, I would love to.”

- Rhonda, sustained recovery for one year.

Recovery Corps: People in Recovery Giving Back

Addiction devastates individuals and families, and negatively contributes to public safety. But treatment does work and is repeatedly shown to be effective in terms of costs and outcomes. Still, as a chronic disease, relapse into addiction is a challenge for many, especially for those who lack the support needed to sustain recovery. The relatively recent movement towards recovery-oriented systems of care recognizes and seeks to address this gap between short-term treatment within a clinical setting and the long-term effort to build individuals' "recovery capital" as they seek to sustain their recovery within their communities. Recovery capital consists of the basics we all need to have complete lives, including a job, healthcare, social supports, and a sense of meaning and purpose.³

Asset: Thousands of Baltimoreans are successfully sustaining recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. Approximately 60,000 more Baltimoreans who have drug and/or alcohol problems are in need of treatment and can follow the same path with the help of others.

Initiative: Recovery Corps will identify, train, and place 100 people who have sustained recovery from addiction for a minimum of two years into treatment centers as volunteer peer recovery advocates – the Recovery Corps – who will provide support to those in recovery.

Initiative overview: For Baltimore City, adopting peer coaching and outreach work as recognized, systematically integrated, and integral components of treatment and recovery services for individuals with addiction is relatively new. The City and its lead partner, Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems, will further this important effort with the creation of the Recovery Corps. Potential corps members will receive training based on curriculum developed by the nationally and internationally recognized Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery. Once trained, the corps members will be placed in treatment centers covering different geographic areas of the city. As volunteer peer recovery advocates, they will first and foremost

establish relationships with people in treatment, acting as living examples and conveying to those they're serving that treatment works and recovery is possible; help people in treatment connect successfully to and follow up with important supports in the community, including family, healthcare, employment, education, social services, legal, faith, and other recovery resources; and help people in treatment adhere to their recovery plans. The City and its initiative partners will also help volunteer recovery advocates who are unemployed to find employment in the field of recovery support, in businesses that affirmatively recruit people in recovery, and with other employers. Finally, the initiative will help to put a different face on recovery by expanding opportunities for people in recovery to go out and volunteer together in their community.

Action Principles:

Affirm all of us are change agents: People in recovery will be formally recognized and elevated, using their knowledge and experience to serve others.

Build bridges across boundaries: This initiative will bring recovery advocates and others in recovery into the community, as a force for change through community service projects; likewise, it will bring community members into recovery centers where appropriate to provide meaningful support to individuals in recovery.

Goals: Improve the quality of life of both the volunteer recovery advocate and the people in recovery s/he is helping.

Metrics:

- # of individuals in recovery recruited and trained to serve as peer recovery advocate volunteers (Recovery Corps members)
- # of corps members who become employed
- improvement in self-reported quality of life of corps members
- # of individuals assisted by corps members
- quality and kind of assistance provided by corps members, including # of connections made to recovery resources



“Here, together, people can at last appear clearly to themselves—not as the giant of their dreams, nor the dwarfs of their fears—but as individuals, part of a whole, with a share in its purpose.”

- philosophy of Gaudenzia, which provides addiction treatment and recovery services.

Baltimore Voices - Jerome

Jerome has sustained recovery for six years.

Was there a time when you hit rock bottom?

It's around 10:30 at night, man, and I feel like I'm the only person outside—I ain't got nowhere to go—and I look at the row houses and I see the bedroom lights on and I see the TV lights on the curtains, and I was like, damn, I wish I had somewhere to go.... I got to thinking, you know, this lifestyle costing me—I'm forty years old—I don't want to still be out here and wind up like these old addicts, my legs not working right, on a cane, drinking wine, scraping up two dollars...

How did you get off of drugs?

I ran into a young lady...she said she had gotten clean through Gaudenzia. She said the meals were prepared real well, and it was clean and safe. She said they would detox you, and I didn't want to be sick no more. The main thing was I was tired, frustrated and I had enough. You know, I had been court-ordered to go to treatment centers before – never done it. But when I hit bottom and went and walked into the center myself, it made a difference. The best thing about Gaudenzia, I was looking at guys that had been through the same thing I did.

Was there anyone there that had a particular effect on you?

It was like a network, it was all geared to help one another. They was talking and I was listening... Gaudenzia became my safe haven, 'cause don't forget I was still homeless... But pretty soon, Harbor Cityⁱⁱ was my second safe haven, with a job... Then I started to get more responsibility to recruit guys from Gaudenzia.

How did that feel, to be able to help others who were in recovery?

Not bragging or anything, but yeah, helping them was a good feeling. At first, my job was just to get the guys there, sign 'em up and drive to the site. But soon this job was my livelihood, and I depended on it to pay my bills. I went to work, I paid attention, and I did what I was supposed to do.

What are you doing nowadays?

My job is to make sure that [the kids' apartments] are furnished and everything is in there that the kids need. Now, I'm like a big brother to these kids. I feel like I've been put there for a reason. 'Cause I've been through a lot of these things they're about to go through. And I've helped kids who was getting off course to change their minds.

Are you in touch with your own kids?

Oh, yeah...now I help my daughter, she's 18, she graduated from high school, and I was a part of that. My son is 15, I'm a part of that...Here's the best thing, me and the kids' mother, we're legally divorced, but she's one of my best friends. I'm a thankful recovering addict.... You know, we all got the same problems. The thing is what you gonna do about it?

What do you think of the idea of people in recovery helping each other?

I think it's a great idea. You know, thanks to someone who took the time to stop and say something to me...I've got my life back.

ⁱⁱ Harbor City Services is a social enterprise that uses earned income from its business to serve a social purpose.

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Supper Club Empowering Young People

“[PACT] helped me get back to being home again—you know, get that jail mentality out, because I had to change myself to actually survive in [the Baltimore City Detention Center].”

- In memoriam: Ronald Gibbs, 17, former PACT participant and Olympic boxing prospect.

Supper Club: Empowering Young People

The Annie E. Casey Foundation amassed an array of evidence in its 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book showing that wholesale incarceration of youth regardless of their offenses—as well as trying them in adult courts and putting them in adult prisons—is expensive, seriously harms them for the rest of their lives, and provides no benefit to public safety; while on the other hand showing that alternative policies, practices, and programs that rely less on locked confinement are working in jurisdictions across the country.⁴ In Baltimore City, two centers serve as detention alternatives for youth: The Mayor’s Office of Employment Development’s Pre-Adjudication Coordination and Training (PACT) Center, and the Department of Juvenile Services’ Day and Evening Reporting Center. In addition, the Department of Juvenile Services’ William Donald Schaefer House is the only DJJ residential drug treatment center for Baltimore City and the state of Maryland.

Asset: Hundreds of youth each year who are involved with the juvenile justice system can connect to positive experiences, supportive adults, and new social networks, which all kids need to help them stay out of trouble and thrive.

Initiative: Supper Club will bring adult Baltimoreans together with youth who are participating in alternative centers, to share meals and conversation around the same dinner table in a safe and supportive environment.

Initiative overview: When asked in informal surveys and exit interviews what they valued most in their experience at the PACT Center, youth overwhelmingly stated that they valued sitting down around the same table to share dinner and conversation with staff everyday. Supper Club will integrate adults into dinner activities at all three alternative centers and will continue the meal-time ritual after the youth are no longer reporting to the centers. It will begin as a pilot in one center and expand to the other two by the end of the initiative. Although the number of youth at each center can vary dramatically from year to year, Supper Club will involve as many youth as can be accommodated

from the three centers who wish to participate in Supper Club.

Volunteer adult dinner partners will be organized in teams, allowing for some to commit to a regular schedule of suppers with the same group of youth and others to drop in periodically as supper guests. Where possible, the meal-time ritual will be organized so that youth and adults prepare the meal together (e.g., unless pre-prepared meals are provided), set the table, share the meal family-style, have conversation, and clean-up together.

Conversation around the table will be both unstructured and structured. An adult in each team acts as the lead facilitator of the structured conversation for his/her dinner table. What is important is that youth feel comfortable and safe enough to share their opinions, their feelings, and their stories in the presence of supportive adults who are authentic in their interaction with the youth.

Action Principles:

Affirm all of us are change agents: Youth who decide to continue Supper Club will take on a formal volunteer leadership role, including serving as lead facilitators for their dinner tables.

Build bridges across boundaries: Youth and adults who would never have had the chance to meet, learn from, and interact with each other now have the structure of dinner and conversation to do so.

Goals: Increase opportunities for, and the social networks of, youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

Metrics:

- increase in trust and understanding between youth and adult dinner partner volunteers (as measured in pre and post surveys)
- # of youth regularly attending dinners
- # of dinner partner connections
- # of dinner partner connections after 6 months and one year
- # of opportunities youth are exposed to through dinner partners

Baltimore Voices - Rahim

Rahim is 16 years old and is a former participant of the PACT Center.

Talk a bit about what happens at dinner.

We have little conversations. It can be about anything, probably like the basketball game that was on yesterday, news—I mean, whatever comes to mind, we talk about it.

Did that help you come out of yourself a little?

Yeah, knowing there are people who are willing to talk and listen. I think when I came here I learned how to open up more... I wasn't too comfortable talking about certain things like my father being passed away and my uncle and all that. I really kept most of that stuff bottled up... I thought it would be all right for me to open up, to let [staff] know how I was, how I was feeling, and [staff] gave me some good advice. It don't hurt to open up for real.

What was the best thing about the adults you met here at the center?

Oh, everybody seemed joyful, everybody seemed outspoken, like they really enjoyed their jobs. They really enjoyed working with kids. I don't know nobody out there that enjoy working with kids.

Do you have adults in your life who are there for you?

Yes, I have my mother and my other uncle, but that's mainly about it. I have my grandmother, she's old, she's about 78. I don't know how long she's gonna be alive but, God forbid, I hope nothing will happen to her. They're the only people I really got. And my son. That's it.

What's it like in your neighborhood?

I think anywhere is probably a violent area, but by me living there for so long, I really don't consider it violent, but there's a lot of stuff like drug activity that goes on around there... I don't hang out in that area like that because I learned how to distance myself, like, for three years on, I haven't been outside around the neighborhood, but to go to the store. I mean, I see my friends and I say "What's up?" and all that, but as far as me chilling, I think it's best for me not to. I got a son, and I want to be around my son when he gets older. I don't want to be gone like my father was. I know it ain't my father's fault, but I want to be there.

What are your plans for the future?

I just turned in my application to apply to Youth Works. I'm trying to look for another job so that if this Youth Works doesn't work out, then I have something to back up on. I want to go to college or try to work in HVAC, heating and air conditioning. I want to do that... It's really interesting to me. The thing about that, it ain't really nothing but math, so you really got to be good at math, and I really enjoy math. That's one of my best subjects.

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Power in Dirt Transforming Vacant Lots

“We got one lady who works with a daycare in the neighborhood, and she brings kids by the garden to teach them how to plant vegetable seeds, and that way . . . they learn how things grow.”

- Lewis Sharpe, manager, Duncan Street Miracle Garden

Power In Dirt: Transforming Vacant Lots

Baltimore City's Department of Planning in conjunction with Baltimore Green Space summarized in its publication *Preserving Community-Managed Open Spaces: Criteria and Process* some of the key evidence supporting the beneficial effects of maintaining, greening, making more orderly, and otherwise caring for the physical environment. These benefits include crime reduction, improved physical and mental health, improved nutrition, increased property values, and stronger ecosystems.⁵ Baltimore has more than 150 registered community-managed open spaces that serve residents in numerous ways, as spaces to gather, to appreciate art, to grow food, to play sports, to just sit and enjoy relief from the built environment of concrete. With every registered community-managed open space, there are many more that have yet to be recognized.

Asset: Baltimore has approximately 14,000 vacant lots that can be re-purposed and transformed into vibrant community-managed open spaces.

Initiative: Power in Dirt will revitalize vacant lots in some of the most blighted areas of the city through volunteer engagement, and get the government red tape and bureaucracy out of the way to make this happen.

Initiative overview: This initiative recognizes and builds from existing, successful efforts in the city to revitalize vacant lots. It will leverage and channel these existing efforts, as well as rally additional efforts, to achieve a common citywide goal of transforming vacant lots so that they are productive spaces again. Volunteers will come from within as well as outside the community where the vacant lots are located. These volunteers will conduct outreach to community members, provide information and technical assistance on how to revitalize lots in their neighborhood, connect them to the resources they need to help them get started, and provide manpower to transform and maintain the lots – which will serve purposes that benefit the community such as gardening, environmental, greening, and arts, among others.

The initiative will also transform the way the City does business when it comes to serving volunteer community members who want to revitalize vacant lots in their community but are frustrated by a lack of, or inconsistent information—as well as inefficient policies and procedures. The City will identify which lots are available for volunteers to re-purpose; provide information on possible ways to re-purpose the lot and information on resources needed to do it; ensure that it will not develop on the land for a minimum of five years, thus allowing community volunteers to invest their sweat equity without fear of having it taken away at any moment; create a clear and consistent process for volunteers to access water more easily; facilitate the process of volunteers' right-of-entry onto the lot through a streamlined Adopt-a-Lot program; and provide information on steps to take for volunteer community members to protect what they have created through a land trust before the five year window expires.

Action Principles:

Affirm all of us are change agents: Baltimoreans from all walks of life, including those living in the most blighted areas, will have more opportunity to revitalize vacant lots in the city.

Build bridges across boundaries: Baltimoreans who otherwise would not go to the most blighted areas, and residents in these areas, can build connections through the volunteer opportunity and structure provided by the initiative.

Goals: Visible impact on three targeted areas of the city, increased community capacity to revitalize lots, and more efficient City services.

Metrics:

- # of lots revitalized or in the process of being revitalized
- # of new requests to the Adopt-a-Lot program fulfilled
- # of new requests for water hook-ups fulfilled
- # of community members contacted by outreach campaigns, events, workshops, or similar awareness strategies

Baltimore Voices - Elroy “Big Chris” Christopher

Elroy “Big Chris” Christopher is the director of the Covenant Community Association in East Baltimore.

You’ve been focused on transforming the vacant lots in your neighborhood for many years now, haven’t you?

Yes, we’ve been doing this for almost twenty years. There was nowhere for the kids to go for recreation that the parents would trust, so we turned our eyes to a vacant lot, and cleaned it up. That mushroomed into a community garden. I call it the Garden of Eden.

We would even tell the drug dealers: give us a chance to help your kids, to help your aunts and uncles who live in the neighborhood and ask them to “please stop the violence.”

The kids come to the garden for afterschool programs, summer camps, ministries, community cleanups. Kids learn the value of planting trees and flowers. And most of all, reduce the violence in the neighborhood. Every week from May to September we do ministries in the community. Every week with the whole community, every week no matter what the temperature, unless its thunder and lightning out there. We’ve been doing this almost 20 years.

What motivates you to work with kids/neighbors on behalf of your community?

The hardest thing is not to give up. Many times you don’t have the resources, but a lot of times you don’t *need* resources. Clean up, talk to kids, help them with their homework, talk to a senior, ask them if they need you to make a trip to get groceries. Those basic things in life is what we really have to get back to. And it doesn’t cost a lot.

These vacant lots, we ran an after school program from a vacant house that we fixed up ourselves. You have 30-40 kids with nothing to do. So what do you do? You go to Home Depot, spruce up the building, the yard, and you build relationships.

This is something that will help inspire our kids, and help inspire people who’ve been locked up in their houses for years, and say, ‘it’s alright, it’s alright to come out and show that you care about one another.’ I always say, there’s power in dirt. It comes out of moving trash, planting trees, and the kids, we’re planting the seeds for their life—all that’s come out of dirt. You can’t minimize the power that comes out of dirt.

How has the community responded to the garden and all of the work that has evolved from it as a result?

People begin to see family participating. Neighbors have Bible study in the garden. We planted over 300 trees. Busted up the sidewalks and planted trees and flowers. Most importantly, when the children see this, they begin to see this legacy, of people coming out of their houses, and learn to love where they live. These kind of things make a huge impact—it’s an investment in our future.

That’s what I call pushing it up to the front. Making it a priority so that people think about where they’re living, and learn to love where they live. Look, there’s nothing super spectacular about this. People tell me sometimes, “Big Chris, you’re doing a great job.” I tell them, what’s so great about helping someone, what’s so great about reading a book to a child, what’s so great about planting a tree? It’s what we’re SUPPOSED to be doing!

stepUP! **baltimore** service plan



Baltimore CARES **Cultivating a Generation of Volunteers**

*You don't really realize it, but when you're helping people, you're always thinking about how to change people. But in order to change people, you have to think about things in **you** that will affect those people."*

- Latoya Felder, CHOICE Service-Learning Fellow

Baltimore CARES: Cultivating a Generation of Volunteers

According to the national Service-Learning Clearinghouse, service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Maryland is the only state in the nation that requires its students to engage in 75 hours of service-learning – which may begin in middle school – in order to graduate. However, each of the 24 school districts in Maryland implements the requirements differently; this leads to wide variation in students’ experiences.

Asset: The next generation of leaders in Baltimore—the city’s youth—can be change agents in tackling the challenges of vacant lots, drug addiction, and juvenile crime through service-learning.

Initiative: Baltimore CARES (Change Agents Reaching Empowerment through Service-Learning) is developing two interdisciplinary service-learning curricula that will engage students in two pilot schools over the course of the school term, to learn about and make an impact on the challenges of vacant lots and drug addiction.

Initiative overview: The first initiative will work with Ben Franklin High School and the Shriver Center of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County to develop and implement a multidisciplinary service-learning curriculum that will engage students over the course of the school year in revitalizing a vacant lot near the school, in the Brooklyn neighborhood of the city. A vacant lot can be used to tell the story of the community, Baltimore City, and even the United States, weaving the social and demographic upheavals and changes affecting all three. It can be used to apply writing, math, science, and other skills learned in the classroom. It can be used to uncover the health and environmental effects of storm water runoff that pollutes the Chesapeake Bay. In other words, a vacant lot can be a rich learning laboratory, and this will be the first

service-learning curriculum that brings multiple disciplines together to focus students on the specific issue of vacant lots in the city and at the same time engaging them in the revitalization of a lot near their school. After development and implementation, the curriculum—along with any lessons learned—and the list of vacant lots identified by the City will be made available to schools across Baltimore interested in replicating the curriculum. Baltimore CARES will also facilitate support for schools desiring to replicate this program. Further, after assessing the performance of the first year of this program, Ben Franklin High School may choose to expand and evolve the curriculum going forward as it continues to revitalize and maintain the lot.

The second initiative will work with the William Donald Schaefer House to develop a multidisciplinary service-learning curriculum focused on drug addiction that also engages youth in recovery—the first curriculum of its kind. The Schaefer House is a small, residential substance abuse treatment program for juveniles referred by the Department of Juvenile Services. Residents are youth between the ages of 14-18 years old who stay at the Schaefer House an average of 90 days, during which time they attend school five days a week, five hours per day, in on-site classrooms.

Unlike Ben Franklin High School, there is no vacant lot that will serve as the focus of the students’ service effort. Rather, the initiative will engage staff and students in identifying a specific need related to drug addiction that the students will address through the service-learning curriculum. What they choose will be up to them, but one ambitious example could be creating and implementing an advocacy campaign, where students use their social studies skills to explore the role of government in preventing drug addiction, their math skills to calculate the costs to society of addiction, their English skills to write personal and persuasion essays that they can use as testimony to government officials.

The 90 days that the youth stay at Schaefer House is both a constraint as well as an opportunity to create a compact curriculum around a service project that still packs a punch—both in its ability to increase student engagement and learning as well as make a difference on a specific need they have identified. After development and implementation, the curriculum will be made available to schools across Baltimore, as well as programs in the city and state that help youth who are in recovery. Further, Schaefer House can replicate the curriculum or choose to expand and evolve it with new classes of incoming youth.

As these programs develop, Baltimore’s Chief Service Officer will continue to seek out interest and potential partners for further growth in the second year of the Cities of Service Leadership Grant.

Action Principles:

Affirm all of us are change agents: Students from a turnaround school, as well as students who are both in recovery and involved in the

juvenile justice system, will have the opportunity to make a positive impact in their community and will be prepared to succeed in that opportunity.

Build bridges across boundaries: The initiative bridges the isolated Brooklyn neighborhood and youth in recovery to the larger Baltimore community.

Goals: Meet Maryland’s Seven Best Practices for Service-Learning: “Address a recognized need in the community, achieve curricular objectives, reflect throughout the service-learning experience, develop student responsibility, establish community partnerships, plan ahead for service learning, and equip students with knowledge and skills needed for civic engagement.”⁶

Metrics:

- Indicators from Maryland’s Best Practices Evaluation Tool⁷
- # of students who participated in service-learning pilot initiatives

Baltimore Voices - Latoya Felder

Latoya Felder and her mother were helped by CHOICE Service-Learning Fellows when she was growing up.ⁱⁱⁱ Years later, she became a CHOICE Service-Learning Fellow herself.

What were some of the things you and your mother were struggling with then?

Me having to go to foster care, me not really being raised with [my mother], and also my mother dealing with her own personal issues—you know, knowing how to be a good mother to me and providing the support she needed to me, because she didn't have that growing up. Both her parents were deceased. She didn't have any brothers or sisters. So it was basically her finding her way in life. I was pretty much the only person she really had to keep her going and motivated....

What was the most important thing you got out of CHOICE?

It definitely showed me that you do *not* have to be a product of your parents.... It allows you to have coping skills and the necessary support systems so you won't be a product of your past, so you can be a better person and have a promising future for yourself.

When you became a CHOICE Service-Learning Fellow, was there one particularly memorable person you helped?

There was this young kid I remember.... He reminded me a little bit of myself because I lost my parents at such a young age and I just remember how hard it was for people to believe in me, and I actually spent the whole day at the school fighting to get him back in school and to get him into his right grade...and it was worth it because he was placed in the right grade so that he could graduate on time.

How was the service-learning experience valuable for you as a Fellow?

You don't really realize it, but when you're helping people, you're always thinking about how to change people. But in order to change people, you have to think about things in *you* that will affect those people.... So we learned about ourselves and things we could change about ourselves when we're working with people.

Talk a bit about what you've got going on these days.

I'm in my second year at the University of Maryland's School of Social Work, pursuing my MSW. I also mentor in the Imagine Me mentoring program...I've been a mentor for four years now. [I hold two part-time jobs.] I volunteer from time to time at different places. I just started volunteering at My Sister's Place...

Did you ever think you'd be doing all this today?

I honestly didn't. I lost both my parents at a young age and my mom I lost at 13, so you really don't have a clear idea as to what will happen next, all you know is that when people know you don't have anybody, a lot of people tend to think the worst and you get so much negative feedback from people like "Oh, you're not going to be successful, you're not going to do this, you're not going to do that".... But my ambition and my motivation was to do better, to be better than what people thought I would be or what my life said it would be.... I'm very passionate about helping people.... It's actually a part of me, to leave a legacy and change lives and give back what was given to me.

ⁱⁱⁱThe Choice Program is a community-based, family-centered case management approach to delinquency prevention and youth development.

stepUP! Baltimore Website

In addition to the initiatives outlined above, **stepUP! Baltimore** is launching a website at stepup.baltimorecity.gov that will provide information on Recovery Corps, Supper Club, Power in Dirt, and Baltimore CARES. Through the website, people will be able to learn more about the initiatives, find out how they can get involved, and spread the word and mobilize others through Facebook, Twitter, and other sharing tools. The website will further promote volunteerism in Baltimore by connecting people to a wide range of other volunteer opportunities. Through a partnership with Volunteer Central, visitors to the site will be able to access a continually updated listing of 100 volunteer opportunities across the city that they can search through and sign up for.



Our Playground at Stadium Place was built in 2005 in Baltimore's Waverly neighborhood after years of organizing and fundraising by the community. In 2008 the playground was destroyed by an arsonist. The playground was a source of pride for the nearby neighborhoods and a symbol of hope for many in Baltimore, and when the community announced they were rebuilding, thousands of volunteers from Baltimore and beyond lent their time and energy to rebuild the playground.

This kind of community energy is needed all over the city. In cities like Baltimore and all across the country, so many talented and caring citizens are giving of themselves to bring about positive change in their communities.

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Endnotes/References

1. <http://www.baltimorecity.gov/Government/AgenciesDepartments/Finance/BudgetManagementResearch/OutcomeBudgeting/CitizenSurvey.aspx>
2. <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/MD/Baltimore>
3. To learn more about the social impact of drug addiction in Baltimore as well as the research and movement behind recovery-oriented systems of care, see:

http://www.soros.org/initiatives/baltimore/focus_areas/drug_addiction
http://www.soros.org/initiatives/baltimore/focus_areas/a_criminal_justice
<http://maryland-adaa.org/ROSCResources.html>
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<http://www.ccar.us/>

4. <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={AD7773E9-4971-4A1C-B227-D04AB9D79065}>
5. <http://baltimoregreenspace.org/downloads/CMOSguide.pdf>
6. To learn more about service-learning, Maryland's best practices for service-learning, and the evidence for its positive results on student achievement, see:

<http://www.msde.maryland.gov/MSDE/programs/servicelearning/?WBCMODE=Present%25%3e%25%3e%25%3e>
http://www.msde.maryland.gov/NR/rdonlyres/CEFD2869-9129-46A3-91CE-443928D1ED6C/25313/Marylands_7_Best_Practices__Aligned.ppt

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Appendix: stepUP! Baltimore Initiative Overview

Priority Action Area	Initiative	Opportunity/Asset	
Drug Addiction	Recovery Corps will identify, train, and place 100 individuals who have sustained recovery from addiction for a minimum of two years into treatment centers as peer recovery advocates who will provide support to those in recovery.	Thousands of Baltimoreans are successfully sustaining recovery from drug addiction and approximately 60,000 more Baltimoreans who are drug dependent and need treatment can follow the same path with the help of others.	
Juvenile Crime	Supper Club will bring adult Baltimoreans together with youth who are participating in alternatives to locked detention to share meals and conversation around the same dinner table in a safe and supportive environment.	Hundreds of youth each year who are involved with the juvenile justice system can connect to positive experiences, supportive adults, and new social networks that all kids need to stay out of trouble and thrive.	
Vacant Lots	Power in Dirt will revitalize vacant lots in some of the most blighted areas of the city and get the government red tape and bureaucracy out of the way to make this happen.	Baltimore has approximately 14,000 vacant lots that can be repurposed and transformed into vibrant community managed open spaces.	
Infrastructure: Youth engagement through service learning	Baltimore CARES will develop two interdisciplinary service-learning curricula that will engage students in two pilot schools over the course of their academic terms in learning about and making an impact on the challenges of vacant lots and drug addiction.	The next generation of leaders in Baltimore—the city's youth—can be change agents in tackling the challenges of drug addiction, urban blight, and crime.	
Infrastructure: Connecting Baltimoreans to impact volunteerism opportunities	stepUP! Baltimore website will highlight the Mayor's Recovery Corps, Supper Club, Power in Dirt, and Baltimore CARES initiatives.	In partnership with Volunteer Central, people who would like to volunteer will be able to search for, find, and access volunteer activities and opportunities across the city.	

	Metrics	Launch Date
	1) # of individuals in recovery recruited and trained to serve as peer recovery advocate volunteers (Recovery Corps members) 2) # of corps members who become employed. 3) improvement in self-reported quality of life of corps members 4) # of individuals assisted by corps members 5) quality and kind of assistance provided by corps members, including # of connections made to recovery resources	Summer 2011
	1) increase in trust and understanding between youth and adult dinner partner volunteers 2) # of youth regularly attending dinners 3) # of dinner partner connections 4) # of dinner partner connections after 6 months and one year 5) # of opportunities youth are exposed to 6) # of opportunities youth identified at beginning of initiative that they would like to be exposed to that are fulfilled at the end of the initiative	Summer 2011
	1. # of lots revitalized or in the process of being revitalized 2. # of new requests to the Adopt-a-Lot program 3. # of new requests for water hook-ups 4. # of community members reached by outreach campaigns, events, workshops, or similar awareness strategies	Summer 2011
	1. indicators from Maryland's Best Practices Evaluation Tool 2. # of students who participated in service-learning pilot initiatives	Curriculum development: Spring 2011 Program implementation: Fall 2011
	1. # of visitors to website	Spring 2011

stepUP!
baltimore
VOLUNTEERS FOR CHANGE



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