

# 10 Vacant Housing

In July 2023, GBC partnered with the Mayor's Office and Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD) to tackle Baltimore's vacant housing crisis—the first collaboration between our organizations since creating the CollegeBound Foundation in 1988.

Our partnership focuses on four priorities:

- Securing public and private funding.
- Establishing governance to drive redevelopment.
- Supporting developers and community organizations.
- Expanding workforce opportunities.

PFM Financial Advisors quantified the scale: 70,000 vacant or at-risk properties requiring an estimated \$3 billion in public funding and \$5 billion in private capital over 15 years. Their analysis showed the return would far exceed the public commitment, delivering long-term value for the city and its residents.

With support from the Weinberg Foundation, we engaged Forsyth Street Advisors to analyze Baltimore's lending market, identify financing gaps, and design new funds to fill them—drawing on national best practices.

Since launching this work, GBC has helped secure more than \$1.2 billion in public funding and is raising at least \$100 million in private capital to stabilize housing markets and revitalize communities. By aligning public and private resources, we are laying the foundation to reverse decades of disinvestment.



“Addressing Baltimore’s vacant housing crisis is about restoring hope and opportunity in our communities. Through my role with GBC’s Vacant Housing Committee and at Associated Black Charities, I’ve seen how collective action turns long-standing challenges into real progress. GBC’s role in convening diverse voices and building consensus is moving Baltimore forward.”

—*Crissy M. Thornton*

Co-Chair, Vacant Housing Committee, President and CEO, Associated Black Charities

# 11 BLocal

Launched by Johns Hopkins University after the Freddie Gray tragedy, BLocal was a groundbreaking commitment by Baltimore's anchor institutions to spend more locally and expand job opportunities. The initiative generated over \$1.4 billion in local procurement and opened new career pathways for thousands of city residents.

That early momentum was real, but sustaining it required stronger coordination. Over time, the framework behind BLocal weakened even as the brand retained recognition. In 2023, GBC made the strategic decision to pause the program—not to step away, but to rebuild it with greater clarity and long-term purpose.

Over the past year, GBC engaged partners, studied peer models in cities like Los Angeles and Philadelphia, and assessed what it would take to create a platform with staying power. The conclusion was clear: BLocal should become GBC's signature initiative for local hiring, procurement, investment, and community engagement—with a modern, scalable structure.

In July 2025, Johns Hopkins formally transferred stewardship of BLocal to GBC. With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, we are conducting a feasibility study to define the program's next phase and establish clear goals and measurable outcomes. Our renewed vision is anchored in four pillars: Hire Local. Buy Local. Invest Local. Live Local.

We will begin with Hire Local—creating intentional talent pipelines, strengthening community-based recruitment, and aligning employer demand with local workforce strengths. In the year ahead, we will also analyze procurement trends to identify high-impact opportunities for local businesses to participate in regional growth.

# B LOCAL

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In building this next chapter, GBC is learning from prior initiatives—including the Baltimore Integration Partnership, UpSurge's procurement pathways, the Bridging the Gap Awards, and the Mayor's Business Recognition Awards. These efforts demonstrated the importance of intentional design, sustained leadership, and measurable outcomes—lessons we are carrying forward into BLocal's future.

Rebuilding trust and transforming fragmented efforts into a cohesive movement will take discipline and commitment. But with sharper focus and renewed leadership, GBC is ready to move BLocal forward—and we invite the entire Baltimore Region to move with us.



“After nearly a decade of leadership, commitment and collaboration, we are pleased to see BLocal advancing into its next phase. Since its inception, our goal was simple: how can we partner together to do better for Baltimore? We’re proud to have played a role in its beginnings and are equally proud to support the transition alongside GBC as we continue our commitment as a BLocal member institution.”

—*Maria Harris Tildon*

Vice President of Government, Community and Economic Partnerships for Johns Hopkins University and Medicine