

3 Strategic Investments for the Baltimore Region

Through All In | 2035, GBC and its partners identified the Baltimore Region's most critical economic hubs—sites that anchor commerce and job growth:

- **Anne Arundel County:** National Business Park
- **Baltimore City:** Downtown Baltimore entertainment district, the University of Maryland BioPark, and the Science and Technology Park at Johns Hopkins University
- **Baltimore County:** Tradepoint Atlantic
- **Cecil County, Harford County:** Aberdeen Proving Ground
- **Howard County:** Columbia Gateway, Downtown Columbia, and the Merriweather District

Private investment, strong business attraction, and development will be essential to sustaining these hubs—supported by aligned city, state, and federal resources, and reinforced through community engagement.



Key Highlights

- Guided creation of a new governance structure and long-term financing plan for the Baltimore Convention Center.
- Drove investments and policies for key regional hubs, including Tradepoint Atlantic, Columbia Gateway, and Aberdeen Proving Ground.
- Promoted transit-oriented development and major transportation investments through the Downtown RISE Masterplan.
- Aligned the All In | 2035 regional plan with the Governor's Executive Order to boost economic competitiveness.
- Formed an Air Service Advisory Steering Committee to help BWI Thurgood Marshall secure flight expansions.
- Championed Opportunity Zones as a bipartisan tool for strategic regional investments.

4 Pursue Game-Changing Opportunities

The federal Tech Hub program is a \$10 billion, five-year initiative established under the CHIPS Act, originally proposed in 2019 as the Endless Frontier Act. The program aims to drive investment in metro areas where innovation can advance technologies vital to U.S. competitiveness and national security.

Baltimore's designation as a federal Tech Hub marked a major milestone. In contrast to previous bids—like Amazon HQ2 and the Build Back Better Regional Challenge, which saw multiple competing applications from the region—Baltimore submitted a single, unified proposal that stood out from among nearly 400 and secured one of just 31 federal Tech Hub designations.

Our consortium of 48 partners identified the intersection of biotech and artificial intelligence as a focus area, focusing on biomanufacturing and startup commercialization projects to position our region for more than 30,000 jobs.

The recognition has helped Baltimore's assets shine: we've been recognized as a top market for tech talent, an emerging biotech hub, a competitive center of cutting-edge industries, and a top innovation hub to watch.

- More than \$21 million has been invested in regional tech hub investment projects.
- The Baltimore Region aligned more than \$800 million of investments from 100 institutions and partners to catalyze life sciences and AI.

Leading this effort gave GBC a chance to signify a major step forward in our organization's transition.

Our Regional Innovation Office will continue to pursue additional federal funding through future phases of the Tech Hub program, as well as other economic development, research, and commercialization initiatives.



"Securing the federal Tech Hub designation affirms the strength of our innovation ecosystem and our ability to align public, private, and community partners. It's a powerful model for future opportunities to support the region's economic growth."

—Jeff Cherry

Co-Chair, Tech Hub Designation Committee, Founder and Executive Director, Conscious Venture Lab



History of GBC

GBC was officially born on January 5, 1955, when 83 Baltimore business leaders gathered at the Elkridge Club with a shared purpose: to unite the private sector in addressing the region's most pressing civic challenges and pursuing its most promising economic opportunities.



The concept for GBC began in 1952, when Frances H. Morton of the Citizens Planning and Housing Association met with a young mortgage banker, James W. Rouse, to discuss Baltimore's mounting problems—aging infrastructure, declining property values, and a shrinking tax base. Those conversations sparked a movement to create what founders described as “a voluntary citizen-arm of government; non-sectional, non-political, and non-profit making,” an action-oriented coalition that could mobilize resources and ideas where government alone could not.

From its earliest days, GBC focused on projects that would reshape Baltimore's physical and economic landscape. Early priorities included accelerating the Jones Falls Expressway, building a civic center, modernizing port and mass transit facilities, and advancing urban revitalization. The organization's first major triumph was Charles Center—a bold downtown redevelopment plan conceived in 1956 with One Charles Center being completed in 1962. The success of the Charles Center inspired an even more ambitious project: the revitalization of the Inner Harbor. In the 1960s, GBC and city leaders championed a 30-year, \$260 million plan to transform the waterfront into a vibrant destination, culminating in the opening of Harborplace in 1980 and the development of world-class assets and attractions, including the Baltimore Convention Center (1979) and the National Aquarium (1981).

This era included the construction of the ‘Highway to Nowhere,’ a 1.4-mile stretch of U.S. 40 built in the early 1970s that displaced over 1,000 residents and disrupted West Baltimore communities. Built during Mayor Donald Schaefer's administration as part of a larger interstate network that was never completed, the project highlighted the risks of poorly planned development and reinforced for GBC and other civic leaders the importance of pursuing projects—like the Inner Harbor—that unite rather than divide communities.

While these mid-century projects revealed both the promise and the pitfalls of urban redevelopment, GBC's roots extend much deeper—part of a 170-year continuum of organized business leadership in Baltimore. That lineage began in 1853 with the founding of the Baltimore Corn and Flour Exchange, created to bring structure and fairness to grain trading when Baltimore was among the world's most important export ports. Over the next century, it evolved into the Baltimore Chamber of Commerce (1896), the Baltimore Association of Commerce (1924), and ultimately the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Baltimore. In 1977, GBC absorbed that Chamber, consolidating the legacies of every major business institution that preceded it and inheriting their commitment to Baltimore's economic future.



1980S–1990S

As Baltimore entered the 1980s and 1990s, GBC played a leading role in major civic projects such as Oriole Park at Camden Yards (opened in 1992), securing the team’s long-term future and bringing the Ravens to Baltimore in 1996. During this same period, the organization launched The Leadership program (1983) to cultivate future civic leaders, created the Development Credit Fund (1984) to expand financing for minority-owned firms, and—together with Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD)—established the CollegeBound Foundation (1988) to expand college access for Baltimore City students. These efforts reflected GBC’s broader commitment to regionwide economic participation and opportunity.

Building on this momentum, GBC established the Greater Baltimore Alliance (GBA) in 1996 to market the region nationally and internationally, attract new investment, and showcase its quality of life, talent, and industry strengths. GBA later became the Economic Alliance of Greater Baltimore (EAGB), which continued this focus on regional marketing and business attraction.

2000–2021 A Period of Broad Civic Leadership

In the early 2000s, GBC expanded its influence across economic, cultural, and infrastructure priorities. The organization championed biotech growth, life sciences development, and cultural revitalization, leading projects such as the restoration of the historic Hippodrome Theatre and the creation of a life sciences park near leading research institutions.

GBC played a central role in retaining the Preakness Stakes at Pimlico Race Course, established the Bridging the Gap initiative to increase minority and women-owned business participation in the regional economy, and remained a steadfast advocate for infrastructure and transportation solutions. It created the Baltimore Transit Alliance (BTA) in 2004 to push for transformative transit projects like the Red Line and Green Line extension. In 2007, BTA became the independent Central Maryland Transportation Alliance (CMTA), continuing to champion regional mobility.

During this period, GBC also advanced education reform, downtown redevelopment, and neighborhood revitalization, ensuring that economic growth was linked to quality of life improvements across the region.



2022–PRESENT Unifying for Regional Competitiveness

A pivotal moment arrived in January 2022, when GBC merged with the Economic Alliance of Greater Baltimore (EAGB), reuniting two organizations with intertwined histories. The decision addressed a critical need for a unified, competitive regional economic growth system capable of enabling Baltimore to compete nationally and globally.

Following the merger, GBC adopted an ambitious Multi-Year Agenda centered on economic opportunity, transportation and infrastructure, and collective impact. Working with TIP Strategies and more than 200 regional partners, the organization launched All In | 2035, a ten-year economic strategy to position the Baltimore region as a global center of innovation and creativity. GBC also convened the consortium that secured a federal Tech Hub designation for the Baltimore MSA, uniting 48 partners and 170 supporters to accelerate the region’s tech ecosystem, and introduced Bold Moves as the Baltimore Region’s economic brand—signaling to national and global audiences that the region is primed for investment.

GBC hosted the first-ever Baltimore Region Investment Summit as an official SelectUSA spinoff event. It championed downtown revitalization through the Inner Harbor and Convention Center redevelopment plans,

as well as the Downtown RISE action plan. GBC also partnered in the Baltimore’s Transit Future campaign, uniting business and civic voices behind a world-class regional transit system—helping to secure \$150 million to sustain bus service and advocating for up to \$350 million in long-term transit funding.

Public safety and community revitalization have also been central to GBC’s recent work. The organization partnered with the Baltimore Police Department and Bloomberg Innovation Team to support officer recruitment and retention, developed real-time public safety data analysis to inform collaboration among government and nonprofits, and worked with Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development (BUILD) and the Mayor to address more than 70,000 vacant or at-risk properties—quantifying the \$3 billion in investment needed to catalyze private redevelopment. Additionally, GBC secured record state funding for Project C.O.R.E. (\$50 million annually) to support community redevelopment and established the Maryland Tough Baltimore Strong Alliance, rallying 120 members to commit more than \$16 million to Key Bridge recovery efforts.

A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

For seventy years, GBC has been defined by its ability to adapt while staying true to its founding principle: that Baltimore’s success depends on visionary leadership from the private sector, working in partnership with public sector and civic leaders to address the region’s greatest challenges and seize its most promising opportunities. From Charles Center and the Inner Harbor to today’s innovation-driven strategies, GBC’s history is one of persistent action, strategic partnerships, and a steadfast belief in the region’s potential.

As it enters its eighth decade, GBC continues to champion bold ideas, unite diverse stakeholders, and harness the power of collective leadership—building not only on a legacy of achievement, but on a renewed commitment to inclusive growth and lasting prosperity for the Baltimore region.