



Reimagine Middle Branch Plan is adopted by Baltimore City Planning Commission laying out an exciting path forward for South Baltimore

The 5-volume Plan outlines innovative designs and implementation strategies to reconnect 19 neighborhoods to one another and to 11+ miles of shoreline of the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River.

BALTIMORE, MD (February 10, 2023) – A multi-year collaboration culminated in adoption of the Reimagine Middle Branch Plan by the Baltimore City Planning Commission at its meeting on February 9, 2023. The Plan represents a commitment by the City and its partners to deliver parks, projects, and programs that unite 19 neighborhoods in South Baltimore by reconnecting them to one another and to the Middle Branch waterfront. The Plan’s five volumes center on a “Design Vision” and “Implementation Strategy” for realizing a more equitable, environmentally just, resilient, and healthy future for South Baltimore.

Reimagine Middle Branch is led by the City of Baltimore and the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership, working in collaboration with Parks & People, South Baltimore 7 Coalition (SB7), federal and state agencies, and a variety of other local organizations. Over 150 residents and technical experts served on advisory committees, and over 1,000 community members have actively participated via surveys, events, and public input sessions. The Design Vision consists of a new world-class open space network, or “park-shed,” for South Baltimore; increased connectivity achieved through trails and Complete Streets; resiliency to climate change and restoring local ecological systems; leveraging private development projects to create public amenities and catalyze new forms of equity-based development.

"The Reimagine Middle Branch initiative represents a transformative step towards creating a more equitable, just, and resilient public space that provides access to recreational and wellness opportunities for communities that have endured disproportionate environmental harm," said **Baltimore Mayor Brandon M. Scott**. "This marks a significant moment for South Baltimore, showcasing the power of collaboration and consensus-building through the contributions of community leaders, residents, institutions, and young people."

Community Engagement

As a community-driven initiative, engagement with a variety of partners and stakeholders was key to the planning process and was accomplished through various platforms: multiple advisory committees including a Community Advisory Community; direct, ongoing outreach with community associations, residents, and other stakeholder groups; social media and surveys; exhibiting at community events; hosting public information sessions. Members of the public

provided their input through several hundred responses to surveys and provided real-time feedback during the information sessions at key milestones over the course of the 18-month planning process. The latest public information sessions took place in December 2022. In addition, the Planning process incorporated paid internships for Morgan State University graduate students and local high school students, who helped highlight issues of concern to community residents while gaining experience in environmental design and planning.

Michael Middleton, President and CEO of SB7 and former Executive Director of the Cherry Hill Economic Development Corporation, says “in the past, communities in South Baltimore have been left out of conversations affecting the future of their neighborhoods. This is not the case with this Plan, which has been proactive in not only communicating with the community, but also in actively involving them in shaping of the future of the area. It’s exciting to see the needs and voices of the communities reflected in this Plan after so much intentional, historical disinvestment.”

Implementation

The Implementation Strategy covers four areas of focus to address how, when, and by whom the interrelated elements of the Plan will be accomplished. The Funding Strategy highlights more than \$165 million in projects and initiatives already completed or currently underway, representing an incredible head start on realizing this vision. The Phasing Strategy maps the transformation of the area over four time periods during the next 20 years. The Permitting Strategy addresses the complex regulatory framework for building projects in and near the Middle Branch, and the Management and Stewardship Strategy proposes tools and tactics for managing and maintaining these new resources.

Funding for the Plan itself and as well as seed funding for a number of related initiatives comes from Casino Local Impact Grants, managed by the City of Baltimore and South Baltimore Gateway Partnership. In addition, a 2020 Maryland State Capital Grant has supported work on the Plan.

Projects underway include Phase 1 of the Middle Branch Resiliency Initiative (MBRI), which has garnered a total of \$48 million in federal, state, and local funding. MBRI will support new climate resiliency structures (marshes and planted berms) protecting critical infrastructure around MedStar Harbor Hospital and BGE’s Spring Garden facility. Other projects already in place include the Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center and BGE Field at Reedbird Park in Cherry Hill, which are now both open and in use as of fall 2022.

With a concentration of investments in South Baltimore's traditionally underfunded Black and Brown communities, this unique Plan integrates physical planning with job creation, support for small businesses, and equitable economic development. "The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan couples new parks and amenities with direct support for local businesses and workforce development," says **Brad Rogers, Executive Director at South Baltimore Gateway Partnership**. "By supporting local workforce development and business incubation opportunities today and

into the future, we look to influence the upward mobilization of the 19 surrounding communities directly," he adds.

In the next five years, other capital projects will improve connectivity and resiliency, including a new East-West Pedestrian Bridge between Westport and Baltimore Peninsula (Port Covington), and a "living shoreline" trail linking the Middle Branch Boathouse to the Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center—ultimately meeting up with the Baybrook Connector Trail through Brooklyn to the BWI Trail in Anne Arundel County.

Future park projects include a new Baltimore Black Sox Park in Westport, which was home to Negro League baseball teams in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This initiative is being led by Parks & People and will help anchor an African American Heritage District incorporating other significant sites, such as Mount Auburn Cemetery, Leadenhall Baptist Church, and the Riverside Park Pool (where a young Elijah Cummings demonstrated against the policy of racial segregation in Baltimore City parks).

Dr. Frank Lance, President and CEO of Parks & People says, "honoring the Baltimore Black Sox in this way is an important part of recognizing the significance of African American history in South Baltimore and bringing these stories to the forefront. Highlighting the accomplishments of the Black Sox and other culturally important sites in the Heritage District will be a step towards more equitable story-telling of the Middle Branch and Baltimore."

The Reimagine Middle Branch Plan is available on the project's website – ReimagineMB.com. As the Plan shifts more fully into the implementation mode, the project team will continue to engage community residents, stakeholder groups, and technical experts in the development of individual projects and initiatives. Anyone interested can register for updates here: [Get Involved](#).

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To view the Plan and more information on the Reimagine Middle Branch project, visit: <https://ReimagineMB.com/plan>.

For renderings and to schedule interviews, please contact:
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REIMAGINE MIDDLE BRANCH

Reimagine Middle Branch is a community-driven initiative to reconnect South Baltimore to its 11+ miles of shoreline along the Patapsco River. The Plan involves designing a network of world-class parks, trails, and programs, while fostering connections and equitable economic opportunity in adjacent neighborhoods. The reimagining of the Middle Branch has been

underway for over a decade. With the vision of creating connections and delivering a world-class waterfront, many plans, projects and initiatives are already in motion.

For more information on Reimagine Middle Branch and events visit: ReimagineMB.com.