

# **Market Center Matters**

## **Strategic Revitalization Plan**

The Market Center Community Development Corporation facilitated creation of the Market Center Strategic Revitalization Plan—The Promise of Market Center—and is the custodian of the plan, but the community owns the plan.

# **Market Center Matters**

## **Strategic Revitalization Plan**

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## Introduction:



A view down Howard Street

*Can you name this Baltimore neighborhood? It contains hundreds of first floor businesses and organizations, the most connected transit hub in the city, a diverse population, a rich backstory, and some of Baltimore's most historic buildings. It's easily walkable to dozens of the area's biggest attractions. What's not to love?*

***This is Market Center, the 27 block area located west of Downtown, from Greene to Cathedral, Baltimore to Madison Streets.***

*It's simultaneously the most attraction-adjacent and the most dangerous; most connected and most abandoned. **It holds the most promise, yet remains invisible to the City:** a Bermuda Triangle wedged between the Central Business District, Harbor Place, and Mount Vernon.*

*Many view Market Center as a blight; an obstacle to travel through as quickly as possible.*

***We see it as the City's crown jewel, lying in plain sight, waiting for support and restoration.***

*After years of development, the Market Center Community Development Corporation is presenting our community's vision to enable new growth and a more connected city.*

## Call to Action:

**Development without displacement is possible, and it can happen here in Baltimore.** With government and private investment as well as new regulations, the Market Center neighborhood is perfectly poised for strategic, co-operative reinvestment and invigoration. Its incredible history, architecture, location, and people make this area unique. **If Baltimore can invest inclusively, we will be held as an international standard for equitable, accessible improvements in historic, inner city neighborhoods.**

There are a variety of initiatives listed within the plan. Some will require long-term planning and incremental change. However, **there are many changes that the city could make that would immediately improve the cleanliness, safety, and infrastructure of the area** — bringing Market Center up to par with the safety, cleanliness, and infrastructure maintained and improved in other Downtown/Harbor side neighborhoods, including Fells Point and Harbor East.

**Stakeholders and citizens see Market Center as a vibrant, diverse, accessible, welcoming, clean, and safe part of Baltimore's urban fabric.** The rich history of the neighborhood as the city's shopping district, collective of artists and arts organizations, and a walkable, transit-adjacent area with historic architecture position Market Center as the city's best bet for a significant ROI and tax base increase.

Since 2018, the Market Center Community Development has been working with the community to lead the development of an overarching plan to enliven and restore Market Center.

**Over 90 people and two dozen businesses and organizations** identified the needs, desires, opportunities - and solutions - that will improve the area for all.

The collective identified six areas that need support and investment. Housing, transportation, the economy, environment, community engagement, and quality of life: **improvements here lead to a safe, welcoming neighborhood that invokes civic pride from everyone in Baltimore.** The result of this multi-year effort? This Strategic Revitalization Plan.

Market Center is the ideal area to accelerate population and job growth, jump-start the tax base, and show the world that community-led, creative revitalization will change our great city for the better. **This is a once in a generation opportunity and the community is ready to seize it.**

This SRP is a living document that needs further input and review to answer questions and include data we don't have the resources to complete. MCCDC is here to connect with other stakeholders who are working on similar plans, breaking the traditional silos that Baltimore institutions unwittingly create. **Real change will not happen without public and private stakeholders uniting to pool resources and align on present and future actions to support and build up one of Baltimore's most valuable neighborhoods.**

Thank you for taking the time to review this document.

**Join the movement to collectively change Market Center for the better. *If not now, when?***

## **Market Center's Strategic Revitalization Plan**

After ten months of discussions with and input from a broad spectrum of Market Center stakeholders, culminating in an intensive two-month series of community focus groups and working sessions, the Market Center Community Development Corporation submitted Phase I of the Strategic Revitalization Plan to MD DHCD in June 2019 to request designation as a Baltimore Regional Neighborhoods Initiative (BRNI) partner. MD DHCD designated Market Center a BRNI partner in November 2020.

The community began work on Phase II in February 2020 but paused the work due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Work resumed in October 2020. Phase II included additional community

engagement, more in-depth discussions on some of the more complex issues facing Market Center, and new discussions about organizational structure, leadership, and resources necessary for plan implementation.

From March - October of 2023, MCCDC worked internally and with the community to ensure that existing goals and visions were still priorities for neighborhood stakeholders.

Informed by the input of 90+ individuals, including representatives of nearly two dozen Market Center stakeholder organizations and institutions, this report's highlights include:

- A collective [vision](#) of Market Center as a vibrant, diverse, accessible, welcoming, clean and safe part of Baltimore's urban fabric;
- A reminder of Market Center's proud [history](#) as **the** shopping district for Baltimore City and the surrounding region;
- Descriptions of the [current community conditions](#) for Market Center's economy, housing, transportation, environment, quality of life and community engagement;
- A look at Market Center's [strengths](#), [weaknesses](#), [opportunities](#) and [threats](#) for each planning area;
- The [goals](#), outcomes, strategies and partners that will bring Market Center's new vision to life.

## The Visions

*The SRP collaborators aligned on overarching goals for six main areas of improvement to regenerate and increase ROI in Market Center. Specific goals, SWOT analysis of existing conditions, and other details are located further in the document.*

**Housing:** Market Center offers a vibrant living experience by maintaining and promoting a diversity of mixed-use, mixed-income housing options and amenities which create a welcoming, walkable and safe neighborhood.

**Economy:** Market Center is a premier international district with a vibrant mix of retail, arts, dining, and entertainment offerings that serve a diverse community of residents, workers, students, and visitors in a transit-rich environment.

**Transportation:** Market Center is pleasantly accessible, walkable, and bikeable, where residents, workers, students, and visitors can make comfortable transfers on safe and reliable transportation options to local and regional destinations.

**Environment:** Market Center is architecturally diverse, with clean, functional, and environmentally conscious infrastructure, and safe, welcoming, well-lit, green public gathering spaces.

**Quality of Life:** Market Center is a diverse, welcoming, and amenity-rich neighborhood whose

civic pride is built on a culture of collaboration to improve the social, physical and natural environment.

**Community Engagement:** Market Center is a place where stakeholders can clearly learn about the community, be engaged in decision-making, feel respected and heard, and have a personal stake in the outcome.

## Primary Action Items

Three main concerns appeared again and again throughout the planning process. Residents, businesses, organizations, and other participants in Market Center are desperate for public investment that will significantly increase the accessibility, desirability, and enjoyment of Market Center. These actions are easy to implement, and are essential to rebuild trust and accelerate renewal and revitalization of the area.

### **CALL FOR IMMEDIATE AND SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN:**

- 1. Infrastructure Improvement**
- 2. Cleanliness**
- 3. Perception and Reality of Public Safety**

The private sector and stakeholders in the area have done all they can - from public clean and green days, calls to 311, and increased vigilance - but cannot improve the systemic issues plaguing Market Center that are preventing the desire to live, work, play, and invest in this valuable, amenity rich neighborhood.

If the City and State invests resources and allocates funding to the goals and outcomes listed in this plan— including increased safety measures, cleanliness, and infrastructure—crime will decrease, development will follow, and more people will spend time and tax dollars in Market Center. Implementing strategies from this plan will ensure that the community's needs and desires are met.

## This is Market Center

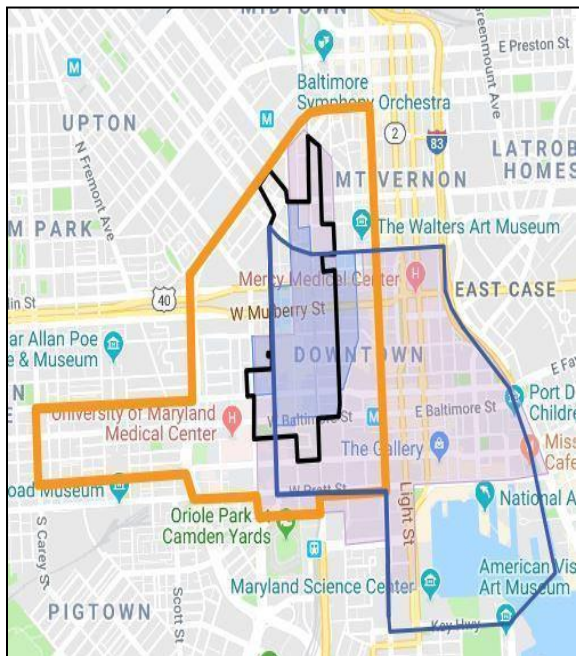


Market Center SRP Boundaries

Market Center comprises 27 blocks in the center of Baltimore City; its boundaries are roughly demarcated by Greene, Cathedral/N. Liberty, W. Madison, and Baltimore Streets, to the east, west, north, and south, respectively.

See Map 1 for detailed boundaries. The Market Center Strategic Revitalization Plan encompasses these same boundaries; it also includes the west side of the 300 block of N. Paca Street.

The Market Center Merchants Association (“MCMA”) and Market Center Community Development Corporation (“MCCDC”) work within these boundaries, which are consistent with the Market Center Retail Business District License Area, shed by City Council Ordinance in 1983.



Significant portions of Market Center are also within the boundaries of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (“DPOB”), Bromo Arts & Entertainment District (“Bromo”), and City Center Residents Association (“CCRA”).

Market Center is also home to the Market Center National Register Historic District, and the Five and Dime and Howard Street Baltimore City Historic Districts. Portions of Market Center also overlap with the Mount Vernon Baltimore City and National Register Historic Districts, and the Cathedral Hill National Register Historic District.

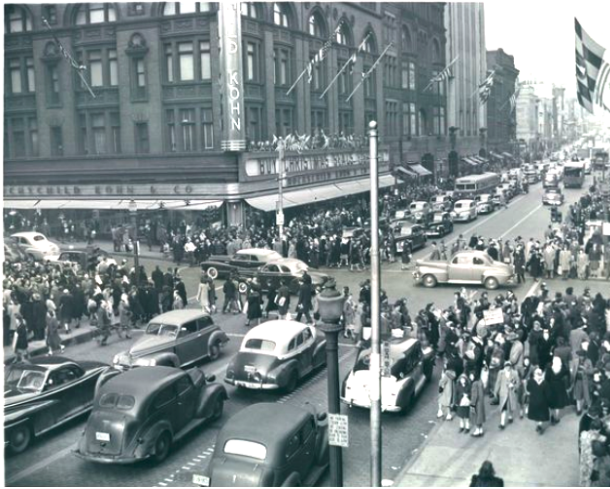
**The overlapping boundaries combined with multiple organizations creating their own identities make Market Center’s identity and**

**branding confusing**, as well as the delineation of the different organizations’ roles and responsibilities. However, they also present an opportunity for partnership and collaboration that can benefit all Market Center stakeholders.

## Boundaries of Entities Working in Market Center

Legend: **Bromo Arts & Entertainment District**, **City Center Residents' Association**, **University of MD Partnership**, **Market Center Merchant Association & CDC**, **Downtown Partnership of Baltimore**

## History



The corner of Lexington and Howard in its heyday

**Market Center has a rich history as a center of commerce in Baltimore.** Lexington Market, one of the oldest public markets in the United States, formally opened in 1806 and continues to serve as an anchor for Market Center. Through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Market Center housed the flagship locations of every major Baltimore department store.

With six department stores located within two blocks of the Howard/Lexington Street intersection along with eight smaller ‘five and dime’ stores, **the area was packed with shoppers from all over Baltimore City and the region nearly every day.** Until the Rite

Aid store on Howard Street closed in 2018, passers-by could see photographs in the windows of Market Center when it was **the** place to shop in Central Maryland.

As the department stores left their flagship buildings for suburban locations, Market Center began losing its cachet as a shopping destination. **This was part of a larger pattern of disinvestment and population flight from Baltimore City** to the surrounding counties during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the City of Baltimore began acquiring buildings from private property owners and relocating existing businesses, with the intent of facilitating a major development project with one or more “big box” stores as anchors. The project(s) never materialized, resulting in the proliferation of vacant buildings we see today. **Over the past twenty years, public and private infrastructure and properties in Market Center have suffered from neglect.**

Despite the vacancies in and neglect of Market Center itself, **the area possesses significant assets and is surrounded by some of the most vibrant parts of the city.** To its west is the University of Maryland, Baltimore with a daily population totaling more than 13,000+ students, faculty and staff, the University of Maryland Medical Center, and Veterans Administration hospital.

Market Center is also surrounded by some of the most vibrant parts of Baltimore. To its west is the University of Maryland, Baltimore with a daily population totaling more than 13,000+ students, faculty and staff, the University of Maryland Medical Center, and Veterans Administration hospital. To the east is the central business district, an employment center which now also includes Baltimore's fastest growing residential neighborhood. The Inner Harbor and Camden Yards are just south of Market Center, with historic Mount Vernon, Seton Hill, and University of Maryland Medical Center's Midtown Campus to the north.

## The Case for a Strategic Revitalization Plan

**Much of Market Center is in a state of physical disrepair, hindering its ability to live up to its full potential.** However, as communities across the country – from Over the Rhine in Cincinnati to Market East/Reading Terminal in Philadelphia – have shown, a combination of vision, leadership, and community engagement, coupled with a shared vision, goals, strategy and resources, can revitalize Market Center. Moreover, Market Center's revitalization can help Baltimore City as a whole. Done correctly, **Market Center has the unique capacity to absorb significant residential, business, and job growth in a location readily accessible to all Baltimoreans, without residential or business displacement.**

**Current circumstances offer the perfect opportunity to leverage this capacity:**

- Market Center's historically low residential population is growing;<sup>1</sup>
- The Baltimore Development Corporation is selling many city-owned properties in Market Center, meaning that a lot of properties are "in play";
- Market Center's arts and cultural community is expanding and diversifying beyond the major attractions of the Hippodrome and Everyman Theatres to include more DIY arts spaces;
- The Baltimore Public Markets Corporation (BPMC) spent \$39M to redevelop Lexington Market and broader, **immediate amenity investment and sustained revitalization needs to happen to fully realize the Market's ROI and revenue-generating potential;**
- Market Center stakeholders will need to anticipate and plan to address increased activity following proposed large scale developments in the vicinity.

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<sup>1</sup> Census Block Group 245100401002, which largely overlaps with Market Center, had a population of 1,331 in 2000 and 2,315 in 2010. MCMA began tracking population within the exact boundaries of Market Center in 2017, and between 2017 and 2020, the population grew from 2,865 to 3,063.

## It's the right time for a community-driven strategic revitalization plan:

- Grassroots, inclusive, incremental revitalization is the most sustainable, equitable approach to community revitalization and economic development;
- Key organizations, including **MCMA, MCCDC, DPOB, Bromo, and CCRA, are coalescing around a set of revitalization principles** which must be solidified, expanded upon with broader input, and articulated in an official document<sup>2</sup>;
- The Baltimore City Planning Commission now has a policy and procedures that can lead to formal recognition of **community-managed planning efforts, which in turn may help guide city decision-making**;<sup>3</sup>
- As development activity increases, **the existing community wants Market retention of affordable residential and commercial space**; that current residents, business owners, and other stakeholders are not displaced; and that Market Center remains a welcoming place for all;
- The area is benefitting from a revived Lexington Market, but stakeholders recognize the likelihood of widespread, sustained benefits that a new building alone is not a long term strategy, and that great commitment is required from the public, nonprofit, and private sectors to **better maintain infrastructure and the public realm, ensure public safety, and renovate and reuse vacant buildings near Lexington Market**;
- Market Center continues to face a number of **challenge including** a significant amount of vacant, underused, and derelict buildings, long-term disinvestment, and a large open-air drug market, **despite its excellent location, transit accessibility, walkability, and impressive stock of historic buildings**;
- Market Center stakeholders want to take a **more humane approach** to neighborhood problem-solving by supporting people who need assistance to achieve stability, realize personal goals, and enable them to thrive independently.
- **If we build it, they will come.** The overwhelming success of local festivals and events like Light City, Fringe Fest, Chinatown Collective's Charm City Night Markets and Bromo Art Walks over the past few years prove that hundreds of people from the city and region are eager to attend unique experiences that make the neighborhood vibrant.

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<sup>2</sup>To ensure MCMA & MCCDC would not be duplicating the work of other stakeholders in the area, MCMA staff asked DPOB and Bromo representatives whether they knew of an existing plan that could function as the official SRP for BRNI purposes. They indicated this was not the case and would support efforts to initiate and coordinate development of an SRP.

<sup>3</sup> <https://pc.baltimorecity.gov/january-11-2018>

## Visions & Goals

**Housing:** Market Center offers a vibrant living experience by maintaining and promoting a diversity of mixed-use, mixed-income housing options and amenities which create a **welcoming, walkable and safe neighborhood**.

- **Housing Goal 1: Ensure future development does not displace current residents and businesses.**
- **Housing Goal 2: Develop strategies to eliminate vacancies.**
- **Housing Goal 3: Attract and retain residents.**
- **Housing Goal 4: Serve people with a range of incomes and diverse housing needs.**

**Economy:** Market Center is a premier international district with a vibrant mix of retail, arts, dining, and entertainment offerings that serve a diverse community of residents, workers, students, and visitors in a transit-rich environment.

- **Economy Goal 1: Achieve a fully rehabilitated and occupied building stock**
- **Economy Goal 2: Strengthen businesses and diversify business mix.**
- **Economy Goal 3: Grow community wealth.**

**Transportation:** Market Center is pleasantly accessible, walkable, and bikeable, where residents, workers, students, and visitors can make comfortable transfers on safe and reliable transportation options to local and regional destinations.

- **Transportation Goal 1: Make Market Center more accessible, walkable, and bikeable.**
- **Transportation Goal 2: Improve utility of transit and micro-mobility/micro-transit options.**
- **Transportation Goal 3: Address on-street and off-street parking to support the Transportation vision.**

**Environment:** Market Center is architecturally diverse, with clean, functional, and environmentally conscious infrastructure, and safe, welcoming, well-lit, green public gathering spaces.

- **Environment Goal 1: Create a clean, safe, welcoming public realm.**
- **Environment Goal 2: Maintain and celebrate Market Center's unique historic character.**
- **Environment Goal 3: Increase public access to green space.**
- **Environment Goal 4: Increase tree canopy**

**Quality of Life:** Market Center is a safe, diverse, welcoming, and amenity-rich neighborhood whose civic pride is built on a culture of collaboration to improve the social, physical and natural environment.

- **Quality of Life Goal 1: Improve the reality and perception of public safety.**
- **Quality of Life Goal 2: Build a culture of civic pride and collaboration.**
- **Quality of Life Goal 3: Increase access to fresh food.**

- **Quality of Life Goal 4:** Foster diversity.

**Community Engagement:** Market Center is a place where stakeholders can clearly learn about the community, be engaged in decision-making, **feel respected and heard**, and have a personal stake in the neighborhood's outcomes.

- **Community Engagement Goal 1:** Build strong relationships with various stakeholders and grow community organizing capacity
- **Community Engagement Goal 2:** Create & maintain consistent vehicles of communication with the public and between organizations working in Market Center.

## Next Steps for Market Center



During a time when cities across the country have seen neglected or abandoned parts of their urban core come back to life, Market Center is poised to become a thriving part of Baltimore's living fabric once again.

With its central location in Baltimore City and the surrounding region, major institutions and employers, a residential neighborhood of almost 40,000 on its doorstep, public transportation options, walkability, historic architecture and history as the region's premier shopping

district, **many of the elements are in place for successful revitalization.**

There is no shortage of models in cities that have transformed areas with similar characteristics into environments characterized by the vibrancy, energy and diversity that represent urban life at its best. Washington DC's Gallery Place/Arena neighborhood, Cincinnati's Over the Rhine, Philadelphia's Market East/Reading Terminal, and Midtown Detroit all provide evidence of what Market Center can become.

For any urban environment -- including Market Center -- to be transformed, a community must have three key elements: vision, leadership and partners, and a comprehensive strategy with implementation resources. The Market Center Strategic Revitalization Plan expresses a clear vision of what Market Center can be in each of the planning areas. **Together, these visions paint a picture of an urban district as a place where all Baltimoreans feel welcome, included and uplifted.**

As always, leadership is essential to realizing a vision. Leadership for Market Center's revitalization must include business leaders, anchor institutions, and community-based stakeholders, and elected officials, including the mayor and councilperson. **The right mix of leaders needs to move the process forward in ways that assure all stakeholders are involved in realizing the vision many of them helped create for this report.**

And of course, no transformation can be successful without the necessary financial resources. **This is also why leadership matters, as leaders can unlock existing resources and advocate for new ones,** as we've recently seen for other parts of the city such as Harbor Point and Port Covington.

For all the challenges Market Center and Baltimore City face, the people of Baltimore City have demonstrated remarkable resilience over the course of its history. When fire destroyed much of Baltimore's central business district in 1904, Mayor Robert McLane vowed to rebuild as quickly as possible. And rebuild he did to the point where just two years later, the Baltimore Sun reported "one of the great disasters of modern time had been converted into a blessing." When Baltimore experienced alarming levels of population flight and disinvestment during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mayor William Donald Schaefer, James Rouse, and civic leaders envisioned and created a revitalized waterfront where residents would rediscover their city while welcoming visitors from around the world.

Now nearly half a century later, Baltimore finds itself at another crossroads – people across Baltimore are working hard to improve their communities, but they are frustrated by factors which are or at least seem to be beyond their control. Market Center is just one of these communities, but Market Center has built in assets which do not exist anywhere else. **MCCDC and its partners are determined to make the most of these assets and transform Market Center into a growing, thriving, equitable, welcoming community. We hope to add additional partners who share our vision and commitment.**

With committed leadership and investments of the resources necessary to realize the vision for a revitalized Market Center, the area can again be a place of pride for Baltimore. A place whose vibrancy, energy and diversity reflect Baltimore at its best and contribute to our city's comeback as an urban success story in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Current Conditions

### Housing

Since the mid-19th century, suburban expansion of Baltimore, Market Center has been viewed as a commercial area, part of the Downtown Business District where people predominantly worked or shopped but didn't live. That is rapidly changing as **more people seek the amenities offered by city centers, and demand for areas with those amenities is especially strong among young professionals, empty-nesters, and recent graduates.** Market Center and the overlapping Bromo Arts District, which features visual art galleries in addition to performing arts spaces like the Hippodrome and Everyman Theater, offer residents access to world-class cultural amenities. Easy access to the University of Maryland's Baltimore campus and Johns Hopkins Hospital via the MetroLink make it an attractive option for students and professionals working at both campuses.

Housing SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
The group did not reach consensus regarding Market Center's current level of housing affordability. Some people feel that Market Center has more affordable price points than other parts of downtown, while others feel that Market Center is not affordable.	
<b>Transportation Hub – good for residents; bicyclist &amp; runner-friendly</b>	<b>Vacant buildings are eyesores that detract from positive development efforts</b>
Decent # of new/renovated multifamily housing units in the last 15 years	<b>Lack of amenities for residents, including grocery options</b>
<b>Strong diversity of residents, artistic community</b>	Poor condition of public realm/physical appearance (including trash)
Mostly intact historic fabric	<b>Crime/safety/perception of crime</b>
Artists and creatives live here and create vibrancy; creativity is welcome	Lack of placemaking
Available live/work options	Absentee landlords
Market Center is a unique place	Limited parking

Minority business community	Trash/urine
10-minute walk to harbor	Lexington Market
Diverse food hub	

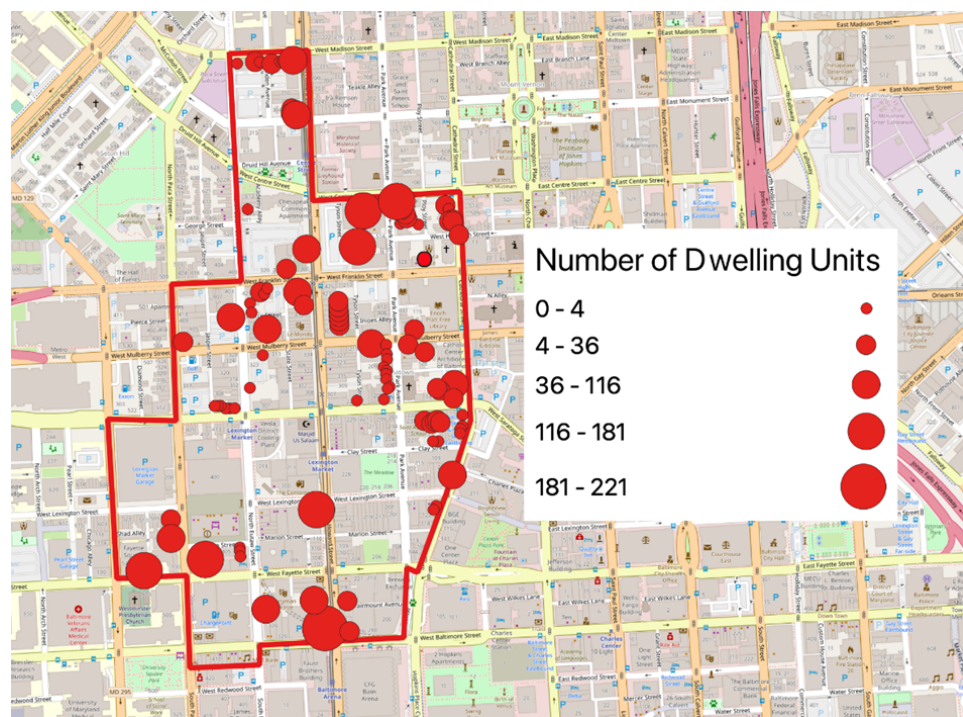
Opportunities	Threats
Growing markets: millennials, singles, couples without children, empty nesters	Lack of parking for current residents – fears it could grow worse
Demand for more university/student housing	Concerns about noise from at least one late night venue – might deter residents
<b>Create more affordable housing and live/work spaces for artists and creatives</b>	Established retailers leaving – to some extent, part of national trends
Potential to invest in vacant property	<b>Awareness that MC is not just a business district but also a neighborhood</b>
Increased UMB focus on revitalization and placemaking	Lack of affordable housing; commercial development; big business
There are a lot of potential sites for housing	Perception that MC is just for transplants and not for life-long or long-term residents
Lexington Market redevelopment	Addict population
Historic buildings	People do not want to live in a construction zone,
<b>Naturally occurring transit-oriented development on Howard Street and walkable access radiating out from light rail.</b>	<b>Lack of resident/business involvement in the revitalization process; Fear that buildings are going to be sold to people who will gentrify.</b>
Strong diversity of residents	Poor communication with residents about what is happening in area
<b>Existing green spaces within and near Market Center can be enhanced and help to attract residents.</b>	

### *Current Status*

**A simple walk around Market Center reveals what a thriving residential neighborhood it already is.** Combined methods including a walking survey of the area in addition to research of existing housing permits and real estate listings revealed approximately 2734 existing dwelling units within Market Center’s boundaries, an increase of 16.1% since the previous update of this SRP. Of those units, 585 (21.4% of total, an increase of just 3.7% since the last update) were developed under the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and have formal affordability restrictions, with some age-restricted and some for other groups like veterans and artists. Over 99 percent of existing dwelling units are in multi-family housing or mixed commercial/residential buildings. For a full list of existing residential buildings, see Appendix A.

Market Center covers an area of about 100 acres which translates to about 27 dwelling units per acre. For comparison, Barcelona, which is frequently cited as an example of livability in cities, has about 93 dwelling units per acre. Some cities in Southeast Asia see up to 500 dwelling units per acre and are seen more examples of crowding, where density detracts from quality of life. Generally, 30 dwelling units per acre is seen as a tipping point towards having a high level of livability in a neighborhood and a range of up to 130, closer to the level of Paris' density, is seen as optimal.

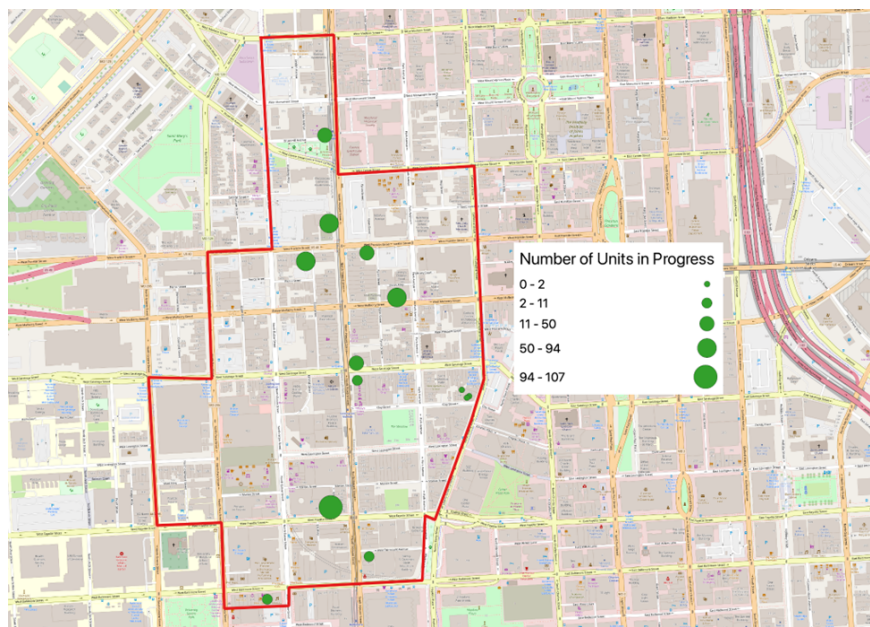
In Patrick Condon's "Seven Rules for Sustainable Communities," he points towards between 20 and 65 dwelling units per acre as an optimal number since it is the result of a combination of townhomes and mid-rise apartment buildings that create an inviting streetscape. The cities mentioned above have these, but with taller buildings than Condon imagined to add to that density while remaining livable. Residential density is not the be-all end-all but an important number to take into consideration. The way in which this type of density is created and the services and amenities that serve residents are more critical parts of measures of livability. This level of density incentivizes the location of businesses and other necessary amenities in a neighborhood but special accommodations may be needed to add types of businesses like changes to zoning laws.



**Dwelling Units Within Market Center**

## *In Progress*

**Market Center is already seeing a growing infusion of interest and investment that follows closely on the heels of the completion of the new Lexington Market.** As the area continues to gain momentum, it will attract more developers and investors. The other keystone development of the area, the Superblock (the colloquial name for the block bound by W Lexington St, Park Ave, W Fayette St, and N Howard St) has seen progress with a new developer taking over the project in recent years. If the developer can solidify their plans and financing to move forward with construction, The Compass, their planned development, would be another anchor for the area offering a mix of residential and commercial space.



Units currently planned, permitted or in progress within Market Center

Currently, there are 18 known construction projects taking place on plots around the neighborhood. These projects have a combined total of 490 confirmed dwelling units (there are 4 projects for which the number of units could not be confirmed).

Some of the major projects in progress that will bring new residents to the area include the redevelopment of the Mayfair theater into 93 market-rate units, the Berkheimer Brothers

Department Store into 107 market-rate units, and the lot at 400 Park Avenue including the former Martick's Restaurant Francaise into 94 market-rate units.

This does not include the Superblock, which would bring approximately 300 mixed-income residential units to the area. **This level of investment in a Baltimore neighborhood without city incentives like TIFs or PILOTs shows how powerful the draw of an existing neighborhood with potential can be.**

## Housing Affordability

With investment in the area increasing rapidly, concerns about the affordability and equity of new development naturally arise. As mentioned previously, about one fifth of Market Center's dwelling units are affordable but only 225 of those are unrestricted affordable units. In addition, the rate of affordable units being built has not come close to matching the development of market-rate housing. **In order to ensure that Market Center remains an accessible place for a diversity of people, more affordable housing needs to be at the forefront of the conversation for the area.**

It's possible to live in Market Center without needing a car because of the number and variety of **transit options - more than anywhere else in Baltimore.** This makes it a great place to live for many people in the city who may not be able to afford that luxury.

Approximately 30% of Baltimore City households do not own a personal vehicle, with another 30% owning only one. There are several existing options for affordable housing in the area that serve specific groups. For example, Paca House has 116 units available for veterans while Mulberry at Park offers 68 general affordable units. **As more investment pours into the area, ensuring more affordable units are built will be key to preserving the area's diversity.**

Market Center encompasses 6 Block Groups that were established in the 2020 Census but only fully encompasses one: Tract 401-4. Census Tracts 401-2 and 402-1 contain very small portions of the boundaries of Market Center. Information about household size and housing affordability is shown below in Table 1. Gross rent includes utilities if those are paid by renter to eliminate variability between how they are incorporated.

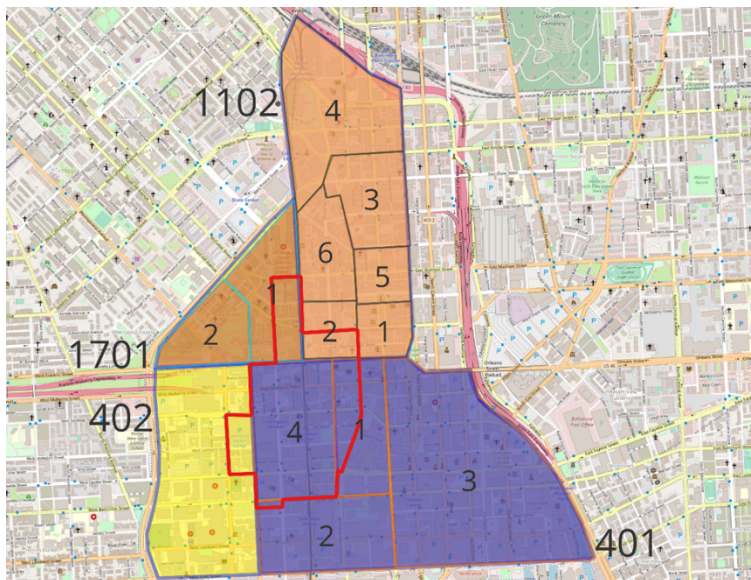
Tract	Block	Number of Households	Average Household size	Median Gross Rent (\$)	% Cost burdened	% Extremely Cost Burdened
401	1	951	1.18	1,478	58.36	28.5
401	2	535	1.96	1,728	57.42	18.55
<b>401</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>1.59</b>	<b>1,217</b>	<b>41.22</b>	<b>5.34</b>
402	1	341	1.65	1,311	45.26	29.66
1102	2	695	1.13	1,542	25.04	13.67
1701	1	618	1.48	1,017	46.02	21.45

City	Avg	NA	2.32	1,146	49.08	26.29
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Block Group-level data from the 2020 census showing levels of housing affordability for Block Groups fully or partially encompassed within Market Center. Note: Gross Rent includes all utilities paid by the renter to eliminate variability of inclusion. Gross Rent was used to calculate levels of cost burden.

Market Center and the surrounding areas are on-par with the rest of the city in terms of levels of cost burden and median gross rent. Block Group 401-4 shows lower levels of extreme cost burden even though it does not include any affordable housing units.

The Household size of Market Center and the surrounding areas is much lower than the city as a whole due to the predominance of student and younger professionals in the area. There are a limited number of larger housing units and amenities for families – including schools.



2020 Census Block Groups

**Both market-rate and affordable units need to be built in order to lower the level of cost burden down to and below 40% (the national average, which is still problematic for the neighborhood).** The construction of more market-rate units to meet demand will help lower housing pressure in neighborhoods around the city and in Market Center. Market-Rate units typically do not require special financing but adding housing units can take pressure off of existing units, lowering costs and increasing density to add amenities.

**Adding affordable units in a well-connected area like Market Center provides relief to families who may not**

**be able to afford a personal vehicle.** Approximately 90% of all new affordable housing development utilizes financing from the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, including existing units in Market Center.

The LIHTC bases the rent cap on the area median income, which is \$121,700 for a 4-person household as set by HUD in May 2023. Rent caps in the Baltimore-Columbia-Towson Metropolitan Statistical Area are as follows as of May 2023.

HH Size/# of BR	50% Income Limit	50% Income Max Rent	60% Income Limit	60% Max Rent
1/0	42,600	1065	51120	1278
2/1	48,700	1217.5	58440	1461
3/2	54,800	1370	65760	1644
4/3	<b>60,850</b>	1521.25	73020	1825.5
5/4	65,750	1643.75	78900	1972.5
6/5	70,600	1765	84720	2118
7/6	75,500	1887.5	90600	2265
8/7	80,350	2008.75	96420	2410.5

Income limits and monthly max gross rents for households in the Baltimore-Columbia-Towson MSA, where the AMI is \$121,700 for FY2023

For FY 2023, Census Tracts 402 and 1701 are Qualified Census Tracts (QCT) which meet HUD's standards for affordable housing units . These census tracts overlap relatively small parts of the neighborhood and sit mostly to the West and Northwest of the area. **Potential investors and developers in the nearby QCTs need to know about** qualifying income levels and the advantages of taking part in the program.

### LIHTC Program Requirements

1. At least 20% of units occupied by tenants with 50% AMI or less
2. At least 40% of units occupied by tenants with 60% AMI or less
3. At least 40% of units occupied by tenants with an average of 60% AMI or less and no tenants with greater than 80% AMI

### *Growth Potential*

**Market Center's current position and the sum of projects in the works have the potential to make it the powerhouse of the city.** The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore updated their Analysis of Market Rate Housing Demand in Downtown Baltimore Neighborhoods and Adjacent Areas with the Outlook 2027 report published in March 2023.

This report analyzed demand for new market rate housing in the study area, a circular area with a one-mile radius originating at the Pratt and Light Street intersection. While this study area is

much larger than Market Center, information gleaned from the analysis is informative. Since the last update in 2017, 4,634 new housing unit were built in this Downtown Study area.

The report found that there are 7,962 households of potential renters and buyers of new multi-family and single-family attached residential units in the study area each year over the next five years. **This is the first time the report has shown a decrease in this number, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated changes in priorities.** Assuming the study area can capture 20% of the renters and 7.5-10% of the buyers, it should be able to support up to 1,120 new market-rate housing units per year for the next 2-3 years, and 1,319 per year in years 3-5. This same study found that the potential market consists of 63% younger singles and couples, 25% empty nesters and retirees, and 12% traditional and non-traditional families.

These estimates assume the continuation of current development and favorability trends towards the downtown area. **If Market Center is established as a desirable destination and livable neighborhood, more people will move here.**

At one time, Harbor East was not a desirable location to live but is now a hub of the city. Market Center could tap into the energy of younger professionals moving to the area. **There are many sites with existing city infrastructure that don't need street and utility buildout.** This includes several that are city- and state-owned offices.

As in-office work declines and more companies are moving out of Downtown (i.e. State Center) the City can issue RFPs similar to the Superblock.

**Those sites are:**

1. The combination of 211 N Eutaw St, 201 N Eutaw Street, and 311 W Saratoga St including the former Hutzler Brother's Department Store.
2. The combination of 301 N Eutaw St, a current MTA Police office, and 307 W Mulberry St, a parking garage
3. The combination of 200 N Eutaw, 130 N Eutaw, and 520 W Lexington, which includes both former Lexington Market Buildings, and their parking garage

Each site can deliver thousands of square feet of retail space and 300-400 residential units each. **With this combined residential presence and retail space on top of a potential two metro line stop, Market Center would be the undisputed center of Baltimore City.**

## ***Advantages***

### **1. Cultural Amenities**

- a. **Market Center contains some of the richest cultural amenities in the state of Maryland.** The neighborhood overlaps the Bromo Arts District, providing plenty visual art within walking distance.
- b. The Walters Art Museum, American Visionary Arts Museum and Baltimore Museum of Art are within a mile of the neighborhood's boundaries. The Hippodrome and M&T Plaza lie inside Market Center's boundaries.

### **2. Public Transportation and walkability**

- a. Market Center's is the perfect location for residential growth due to the proximity to major educational institutions and job centers. Its mix of building uses and public transportation connections can make it a destination neighborhood for residents seeking urban amenities.
- b. The proximity to Mount Vernon and Federal Hill, replete with shops, restaurants, and bars, make this an excellent option for those who want to live car-free or car-lite. **Market Center contains dozens of move-in ready commercial space just waiting for new tenants.**

### **3. Proximity to job and education centers**

- a. Downtown and Midtown Baltimore are the economic hubs of the city, holding host to thousands of jobs between State of Maryland, City of Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, University of Maryland, and many more mid-sized companies.
- b. With an increase in housing options, public transportation, and amenities, Market Center can become the go-to neighborhood for people working downtown to live.

## ***Challenges***

### **1. Lacking daily amenities**

- a. **The neighborhood does not have grocery options.** The only options are Potung Market, Streets Market, and a single stall in Lexington Market - all more expensive options.
- b. **Purchasing food is the most frequent trip people will make.** Not having food options restricts the neighborhood's walkability. Without a larger grocery store or a wider variety of fresh food options, many residents will be forced to rely on cars and the area will run into a shortage of storage options.
- c. **Other notable missing amenities include a laundromat and a hardware store.** For families looking to move to the area, there is also the lack of a school to account for. As the population grows, Market Center will need to work with Baltimore City Public Schools on a potential solution to this.

## 2. Affordability

- a. It's expensive to live in Baltimore City. Market Center follows that pattern. This can change as the neighborhood develops.
- b. Increasing the number of market-rate and affordable units will relieve the pressure and high rents surrounding and inside the neighborhood.
- c. If more property owners and developers know about the LIHTC, it will help alleviate this issue. However, obtaining funding and tax credits is a competitive process and can't always play a factor in developing more units.

## 3. Vacant and underutilized Buildings

- a. Vacant buildings are not unique to Market Center, but the amount and condition of the buildings, many with historic, irreplaceable architecture, contribute to the neighborhood's reputation. **Many retail storefronts and buildings in what was Baltimore's historic retail core are shuttered and underutilized.**
- b. **Many buildings are in dangerously derelict conditions.** The Gomprecht and Benesch Building at 320 N. Eutaw Street has caught fire twice in the last decade. These buildings are challenging projects but are a unique opportunity for innovative development and infill.
- c. **With changes like the Second Egress rule, urban infill buildings could replace vacant buildings on these lots.**

## 4. Car Traffic

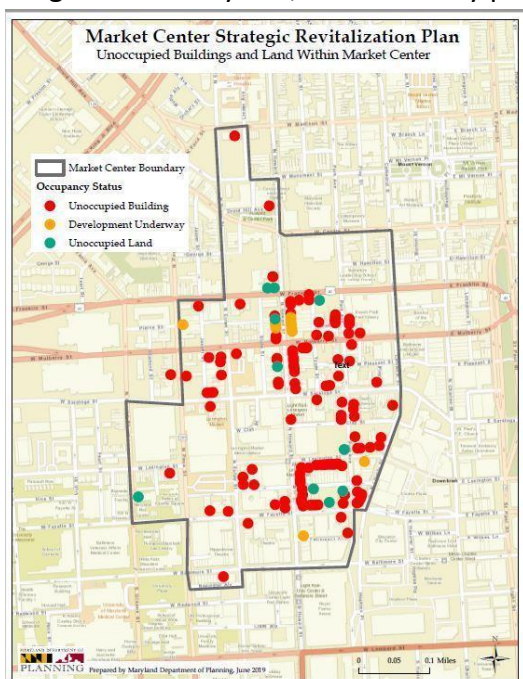
- a. Franklin and Mulberry Streets are the city's two main routes to travel east and west through Baltimore as quickly as possible. These corridors are packed with cars throughout the day, making it dangerous, unhealthy, and boring for pedestrian travel.
- b. **Engaging Baltimore City DOT to improve walkways will be a first step, and ensuring that an east-west transit line crosses the neighborhood will reduce traffic in the future..**

## 5. Public Safety

- a. Public safety was the primary resident concern expressed during the public engagement period. **Post 114 is regularly cited as one of the most dangerous precincts in the area**, and despite police presence, an open air pill market is thriving outside of Lexington Market, and gang activity is rampant.
- b. **Public Safety is incredibly important for resident confidence in an area. It's paramount that all stakeholders invest in safety measures.** As the area becomes more populated, criminal elements will leave the area.
- c. Vacancies and low population contributes to the sense of danger that people feel walking through the area. **Attracting and retaining more people to the area is the number one way to increase public safety in Market Center.**

## Economy

**Market Center was once the region's premier shopping destination, but this changed as more stores moved to the suburbs.** Public policy exacerbated the losses in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century through to the early 21<sup>st</sup>, when the city purchased properties and relocated existing businesses



Unoccupied Buildings Within Market Center

with the goal of assembling land for a large mixed-used development project, anchored by one or more big box stores. **This project never materialized, and most of the buildings remain vacant.**

The community has yet to rebound from that exodus. An estimated 37% of buildings in Market Center (133 of 370) are currently unoccupied, and ten parcels of land are vacant. Eleven additional buildings are unoccupied but undergoing redevelopment. Map 4 illustrates the location of unoccupied buildings and land in Market Center.

The unoccupied buildings are both evidence of a struggling business district and a factor in the ongoing difficulties of attracting businesses and customers. **The prevalence of vacant buildings creates significant gaps in**

**Market Center's fabric and contributes to the current perception of the area as an uninviting place to shop and spend time in – they are a deterrent to customers, business owners, and investors.**

Economy SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Transit accessibility; transportation nexus	Vacant, underused, dilapidated building stock – sense of unease
Lots of hidden treasures	Sense of disorder, neglect

Lexington Market – community anchor	<b>Street front experience; poor appearance of storefronts</b>
Strong, growing downtown residential market (singles, childless couples, millennials, empty nesters) – good for business	<b>Dirty conditions, trash</b>
Captive audience, large daytime population (students, employees, UM)	<b>Failing infrastructure</b>
Proximity to Central Business District (walking distance); downtown location	<b>Open air drug market; drug use; concentration of clinics</b>
Close to Inner Harbor and other attractions – possibility of attracting visitors	Perception & reality of crime
Opportunity Zone and other incentives	Loitering
Affordability	High retail vacancies & limited market for retail
Increased UMB focus on revitalization and placemaking	High cost of everyday goods
<b>Many of Baltimore’s primary tourist attractions, sports &amp; entertainment venues, local shopping and ethnic dining options are within or walkable from Market Center</b>	Lack of destination dining options
<b>Historic architecture and authentic feel of Market Center enhance attractiveness to new businesses and investors</b>	<b>Lack of awareness of businesses</b> that offer goods and services of interest, coupled with perception problems that deter people from walking through the neighborhood to discover them
Ethnic & racial diversity of business owners; many of whom desire to purchase property	
“range of activities for a range of folks, at various price points” – diverse, ethnic restaurants, food; fun things to do at all price points; community businesses.	

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<b>Help artists makes connections for work and development opportunities</b>	<b>Established retailers closing, leaving</b>
Concentrated support to help artists find housing, space, resources	<b>Negative perceptions about Baltimore and Market Center</b>

Catalytic redevelopment sites	Lack of incentives for tech employers
Connectivity to entertainment and attractions	Lack of trade schools, internships, apprenticeships
Coolness factor	Lack of job training/workforce/skills development programs
Growing downtown residential population	Poor track record of retaining artists after they graduate
Hub	UMMS Controversy – impact on future investment
Brand ambiguity	<b>Brand ambiguity</b>
Attract retail that is not dependent on density	
<b>Opportunity to better match retail supply with demands of existing customers.</b> (Affordable restaurants and shopping for seniors; bars, restaurants, breweries, ice cream shops, coffee shops, places to study for students, for example)	
<b>Increase residents', employees', students' awareness of businesses that offer goods and services of interest.</b> Offer free tours, bike & brunch tours, 'taste of' events, 'pay your own way' activities to increase awareness; participate in Free Fall Baltimore; highlight local businesses and share information through UMB Community Engagement Center newsletter, Collegetown Network, IKE Kiosks, Bus stop signs, UM Fall Fest	
Student groups need places to hold events, and students need places to study - <b>opportunity for collaboration with businesses</b>	

### **Businesses & Retail Demand**

**Within Market Center's 27-block footprint, there are 734 businesses and 7,806 employees according to the U.S. Census Bureau.** Of the businesses, 118 are in health care and social assistance, 104 in retail; 80 in other services; and 77 in accommodations and food services.

MCMA also tracks the number and type of businesses, but its inventory is limited to the ground floor of buildings. This focus stems from Market Center's status as a City of Baltimore Retail Business District License (RBDL) area.<sup>4</sup> **As of April 2019, there were 283 ground floor businesses in Market Center, which includes businesses in Lexington Market and Mount**

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<sup>4</sup> Market Center is one of ten designated Retail Business District License (RBDL) areas in the City of Baltimore, which are geographic areas established by City Council Ordinance. Within the RBDL, businesses are assessed an annual fee. The City bills the businesses, collects the revenue, and disburses 97% of the proceeds to the local business association to use to support and improve the business district. In the case of Market Center, only businesses occupying the ground floor are assessed the fee, which is 20 cents per square foot.

**Vernon** Marketplace. This is a decline from approximately 300 in 2018. Table 4 shows the breakdown of Market Center’s 283 ground floor businesses in April 2019:

<b>First Floor Businesses in Market Center, by Type</b>	
<i>Retail</i>	39%
<i>Food &amp; Beverage</i>	30%
<i>Service</i>	26%
<i>Arts &amp; Entertainment</i>	2%
<i>Other</i>	2%

Source: Market Center Merchants Association Business Inventory, April 2019

The most common types of ground floor businesses are:

<b>Most Common Type of Ground Floor Businesses in Market Center</b>		
<i>General Goods</i>	24	Of these, 14+ specialize in fragrance/oils.
<i>Carry-Out</i>	51	This includes food hall stalls, and there is a great variety in types of food and prices.
<i>Convenience Stores</i>	19	
<i>Restaurants – Counter Service</i>	14	
<i>Hair Salons</i>	12	
<i>Barber Shops</i>	11	
<i>Cell Phone Stores</i>	10	
<i>Jewelry Stores</i>	7	

Source: Market Center Merchants Association Business Inventory, April 2019

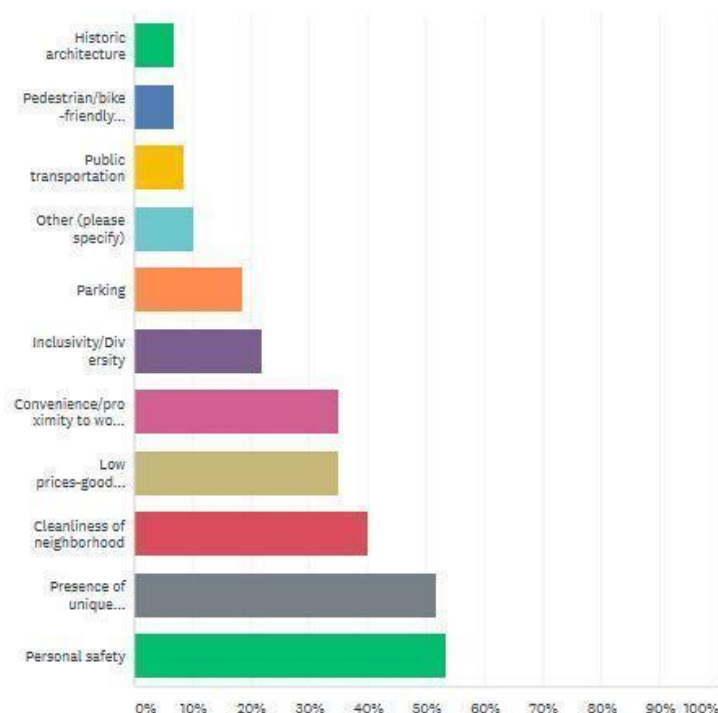
## Chart 2

Focus group participants and respondents to the 2019 residential survey indicated that Market Center has enough general goods stores, convenience stores, hair salons/barber shops, cell phone stores, and jewelry stores. **The community wants more business options.** These include both businesses not yet in Market Center, or businesses offering niche and unique services (specialty hair salons, for example).

**Personal safety, presence of unique businesses and arts and entertainment venues, and neighborhood cleanliness** were the top three reasons surveyed residents did not shop or dine in Market Center more. In this same survey, residents were asked what three qualities were most important to them when deciding where to shop and dine.

When choosing where to shop/dine, what three qualities are most important to you?

Answered: 60 Skipped: 0



Source: Market Center Merchants Association Residents Survey, Winter 2019

Market Center boasts **ethnic dining and shopping alternatives, as well as an ethnically and racially diverse group of business owners**. 55% of respondents rated the food offerings in Market Center as good, very good, or excellent. Market Center can leverage and build these assets.

The informal illegal drug economy in Market Center often takes place in the Eutaw /Lexington/ Saratoga Street area close to Lexington Market. Many Lexington Market patrons actively avoid other businesses in the area because of drug activity.

Although Market Center is adjacent to significant economic and cultural activity, the neighborhood does not reap the benefits the way other neighborhoods do. **Tens of thousands**

**of potential Market Center customers live, work or attend school, sports & cultural events and conventions within and within one mile of Market Center boundaries.**

There are **8,046 businesses, 117,578 employees, and 48,105 residents** within a one-mile radius of the intersection of Howard and Saratoga Streets.<sup>5</sup>

More than 6,700 students are enrolled at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, which is adjacent to Market Center’s western boundary. Thousands of people from the city and neighboring counties travel in to attend events at Oriole Park at Camden Yards, M&T Bank Stadium, the new CFG Arena, the Hippodrome and Everyman Theatres, and more.

**These employees, students, and visitors represent a largely untapped customer base.** Through the planning process, a residents’ survey, and unofficial channels, people have repeatedly emphasized that **concerns about safety, conditions on the streets and vacant buildings currently deter them – even those who live and work in Market Center – from patronizing businesses in Market Center**, contributing to lower-than-expected retail business. In the 2019 Residential Survey, **safety concerns were the number one reason** respondents said they do not dine or shop in Market Center more frequently, followed by variety and quality of offerings, as noted above.

**DPOB provided Market Center data that shows how the retail sector can grow within Market Center and within a one-mile radius of Howard and Saratoga.** This summary of the data for anticipated growth by retail store type between 2019 and 2024 includes each of the major categories of stores and any subcategory with anticipated growth greater than \$5 million within the 1-mile radius of 300 N. Howard:

<b>Table 7: Retail Stores Demand Growth, 2019-2024 Within the 1-Mile Radius of 300 N. Howard</b>		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Growth in Demand</i>	
	1-mile radius from 300 N. Howard	MCMA Boundaries
<i>Motor Vehicle &amp; Parts Dealers</i>	\$29.6m	\$2.4m
<i>Automobile Dealers</i>	\$26.3m	\$2.1m
<i>Furniture &amp; Home Furnishings Stores</i>	\$1.8m	\$152k
<i>Electronics &amp; Appliance Stores</i>	\$1.7m	\$144k

<sup>5</sup> Source: Environics Analytics | Claritas, 2019, courtesy of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore

<i>Building Material &amp; Garden Equipment &amp; Supplies Dealers</i>	\$5.6m	\$383k
<i>Food &amp; Beverage Stores</i>	\$11.4m	\$991k
<i>Grocery Stores</i>	\$9.7m	\$850k
<i>Health &amp; Personal Care Stores</i>	\$6.7 million	\$555k
<i>Pharmacies &amp; Drug Stores</i>	\$5.6m	\$460k
<i>Gasoline Stations</i>	\$10m	\$863k
<i>Clothing &amp; Clothing Accessories Stores</i>	\$2.5m	\$226k
<i>Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, &amp; Books</i>	\$1.21m	\$103k
<i>General Merchandise Stores</i>	\$10.7m	\$919k
<i>Other General Merchandise Stores (not dept. stores)</i>	\$8.67m	\$742k
<i>Miscellaneous Store Retailers</i>	\$1.7m	\$137k
<i>Non-Store Retailers</i>	\$10.7m	\$893k
<i>Electronic Shopping &amp; Mail-Order Houses</i>	\$9.5m	\$791k
<i>Food Service &amp; Drinking Places</i>	\$16.3m	\$1.38m
<i>Restaurants &amp; Other Eating Places</i>	\$14.1m	\$1.19m

Source: Environics Analytics | U.S. Census Bureau | U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, courtesy of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore

**This data shows more growth in the Food Service & Drinking Places** than in all categories other than Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers. Market Center is not likely to attract Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers, in part because these types of businesses mostly locate on major arterial roads, but also because Baltimore City's zoning code only permits motor vehicle dealerships with fully enclosed structures in the C5 zone (which is Market Center's zone).

The retail gap analysis for Market Center, which compares the amount of money spent by residents in Market Center to the amount of money earned by businesses in Market Center at certain types of businesses, shows leakage of \$3,319,680 from full-service restaurants.<sup>6</sup>

**Together, this data appears to point to an opportunity to increase Food Service & Drinking Places, specifically full-service restaurants.**

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<sup>6</sup> Source: Retail Power, Environics Analytics | U.S. Census Bureau | U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics | InfoUSA, Courtesy of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore

### *Employment & Workforce Development*

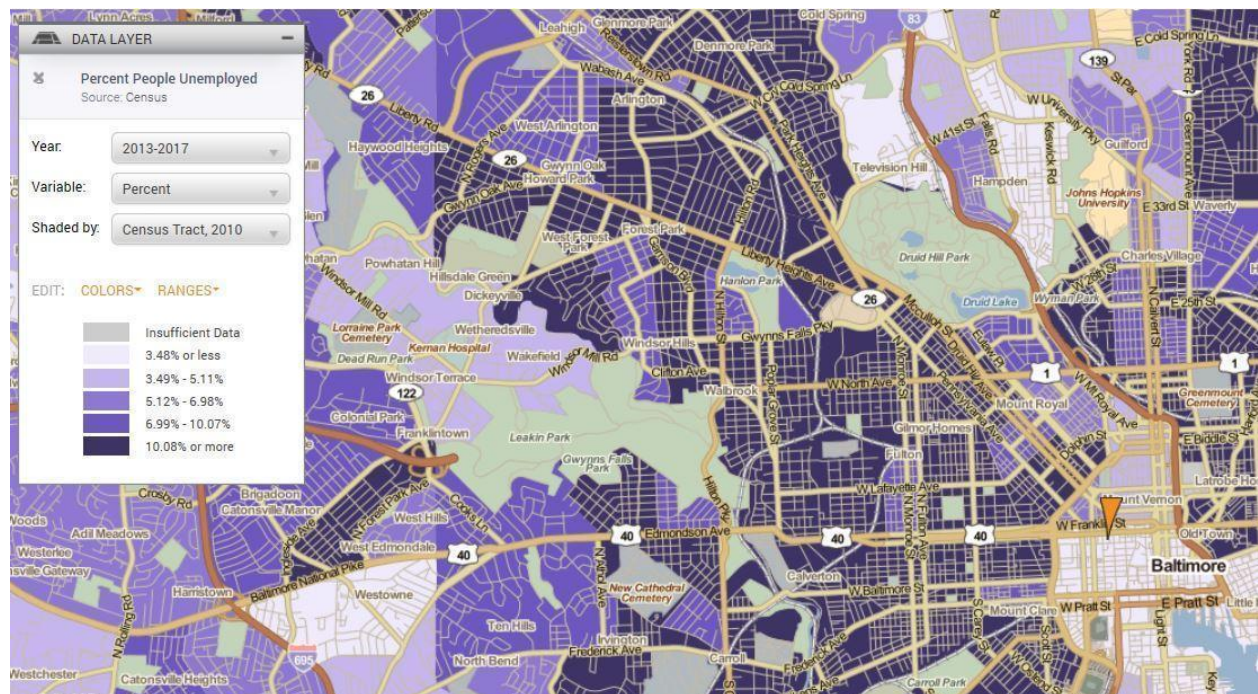
As noted previously, **117,578 people work within one mile of 300 N. Howard**, and **7,806 people work within the boundaries of Market Center**. Table 5 shows the number of employees by industry in Market Center, with Public Administration claiming the greatest number.

<b>Market Center Employment by NAICS Code, 2019</b>	
<i>92: Public Administration</i>	2,408
<i>61: Educational Services</i>	926
<i>62: Health Care and Social Assistance</i>	726
<i>44: Retail Trade</i>	487
<i>81: Other Services (except Public Administration)</i>	474
<i>72: Accommodation and Food Services</i>	468
<i>23: Construction</i>	381
<i>54: Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</i>	351
<i>56: Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services</i>	336
<i>99: Unassigned</i>	302
<i>53: Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</i>	210
<i>71: Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</i>	170
<i>51: Information</i>	148
<i>52: Finance and Insurance</i>	118
<i>42: Wholesale Trade</i>	113
<i>48: Transportation and Warehousing</i>	100
<i>31: Manufacturing</i>	71
<i>55: Management of Companies and Enterprises</i>	10
<i>11: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</i>	7

Source: Environics Analytics | InfoGroup USA, courtesy of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore

64% of the population in Market Center 16 years and older are employed; 2% are unemployed; and 34% are not in the labor market. Health care practitioner/technician is the most common occupation. **The neighborhoods immediately west of Market Center and to the northeast along the Metro Subway line suffer from some of the most severe unemployment rates in the city (10.08+%).**

**Job growth in Market Center, which is more feasible than job growth in many neighborhoods – because of Market Center’s building stock, proximity to downtown, robust transit access, and access to many main roads – could be a game changer for these communities.**



Source: The Reinvestment Fund, Policy Map, May 2019.

Data from 2015 show that **99.8% of the people who worked in Market Center lived outside of Market Center, and 98.1% of the people who lived in Market Center worked outside of Market Center.** In 2015, only 19 people both lived and worked in Market Center. Of the people whose primary jobs were in Market Center, 55% lived within ten miles of Market Center.

The greatest number of people (1,960) commuting from outside Market Center to primary jobs within Market Center commuted from Census tracts northeast of Market Center, followed by 1,590 commuters from Census tracts northwest of Market Center.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2015), courtesy of the Baltimore Development Corporation

There are several job training, workforce development, or co-working resources within or close to Market Center:

1. G.R.O.W. (Getting Ready for Obstacles in the World) and B.E.A.M. (Baltimore Economic and Advancement Movement) work with 18-24 years old on mentorship, life coaching, housing stability, financial literacy, soft skills, etiquette, career readiness training, entrepreneur guidance, internships, and ultimately long-term sustainable vocation in an Earn & Learn format.
2. The Veterans Administration Annex on Fayette Street offers nursing education and recruitment.
3. University of Maryland, Baltimore, has a community engagement center which offers job readiness counseling, though that is located west of Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard.
4. The University of Maryland Medical System partners with UMB at its community engagement center for work readiness programs, and with other partners such as Baltimore City Community College and Center for Urban Families for technical skills training.
  - a. Through these sources, UMMS recruits people for employment, with an emphasis on Certified Nursing Assistants, Patient Care Technicians, Medical Assistants, and clerical and service jobs. UMMS also partners with high schools to prepare students for jobs such as surgical technologists and phlebotomists.
5. The Enoch Pratt Free Library's Central Library is in Market Center, and its job and career center offers clinics, courses and materials on job hunting, resume writing, interviewing techniques, career planning, and occupations. Patrons can also use computers for job-related activities.
6. The Harbor Bank of Maryland Community Development Corporation operates the Joseph Haskins, Jr., Center for Community and Economic Development at 25 W. Fayette Street, just outside of Market Center. The Center offers low-cost office space for entrepreneurs, as well as access to technical assistance and other resources.
7. The Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) outreach team visits Lexington Market periodically, as does the MOED mobile unit.

**Despite these resources, many people who socialize in Market Center are still looking for work.** Anecdotally, whenever volunteers are cleaning the streets or gardening, people ask about employment opportunities. There is still a need, but additional research is necessary to understand that need.

### *Focus Group Input*

Focus group participants stated that **Market Center needs stores that meet a variety of necessities and desires at different price points, and that stores should “sell things people recognize” (referring to brands).** Participants in the UMB focus group like the “range of activities and businesses for a range of folks at various price points.” Participants are **interested in expanding the international restaurant, business, and cultural scenes, and they would like more arts and entertainment venues.** They want Market Center to feel and function more like an arts district.

Participants **noted that stores should be open later and during weekends,** both for the convenience of people who want to shop during these times, but also because of the impression that closed businesses give.

One participant noted that when he sees store owners closing during daylight hours, it makes him think that there is something wrong and he should not be there for safety reasons.

With respect to safety, participants stated **the perception and reality of crime in Market Center hurts businesses’ ability to attract patrons** and deters employees from venturing beyond their place of employment for meals or to run errands.

Business owners also brought up the **need to reassess on-street parking restrictions,** such as the afternoon rush hour restrictions on Park Avenue, Franklin Street, and Mulberry Street (which deter some customers from stopping on their way home from work) and the 24-hour restrictions on the 200 block of Eutaw Street.

Vacant storefronts are a challenge, and an opportunity to attract more retailers and capture the dollars that UMB students, faculty, and staff spend elsewhere. Participants also stated that **the historic architecture and authentic feel of Market Center can/should enhance attractiveness to new businesses and investors.**

**There is also an interest in ensuring that artists of all types are welcomed as part of the Market Center economy** – by ensuring that they have safe, affordable, permanent spaces to live, create, and share their work; connecting them with opportunities to own properties; connecting them with building and business owners to collaborate on projects; and connecting them with educational and mentoring opportunities to facilitate their transition into sustainable businesses (if they choose).

## Transportation

**There is no location in Baltimore with better access to public transportation than Market Center.** It is one of only two locations in the city traversed by both the light rail and Metro subway lines – with only one block between the Lexington Market stops on both. Moreover, the light rail provides direct access to AMTRAK Northeast Corridor train service, MARC commuter rail and Bolt Bus service to New York at Penn Station as well as national and international air travel at BWI Airport. **The reinstated Red Line rail project will be located adjacent to the hub.**

Transportation SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>More transportation options here than elsewhere in the city.</b>	<b>Current conditions of streets and sidewalks.</b> Not ADA Compliant. DOT does not have resources necessary to meet capital needs.
Connectivity – This is one of only two locations where Metro and LRT stops are within a block of each other.	<b>Poor lighting</b> hinders pedestrian activity and other forms of micro-mobility.
Connectivity – LRT provides connections to Amtrak & BWI.	<b>Incomplete transit network.</b>
<b>Connectivity &amp; Central Location</b> – Multiple forms of transit provide connections to employment centers (UMB, UMMS, VA, downtown business district). Particularly valuable to people living in West and NW Baltimore.	Despite the presence of multiple forms of transportation and bus lines, how to connect between various modes of transportation is not intuitive.
Presence of dense, transit-supportive land use.	Light rail not in a state of good repair. Cars are currently going through a mid-life overhaul – missed opportunity to purchase more inobtrusive vehicles.
Grid network of streets – good bones for multiple route options for multiple forms of transportation.	<b>LRT hazards – weaving lane on Howard</b>
UMB Police Shuttle	MTA will replace rails on Howard Street – missed opportunity to correct convoluted tracks.
	Bus stops attract a lot of people, which others view with apprehension.

	<b>Sorely neglected infrastructure.</b>

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<b>Capitalize on transit with transit-oriented land use.</b> The city can be more intentional about supporting transit-oriented development through policies, decision-making, incentives, funding. Supportive land use can positively impact the use of alternative modes of transportation.	A lot of bus routes come downtown, but MTA has a limited number of places for layovers & hubs.
BCDOT needs to explore options for <b>expanding local transit and micro-transit services</b> to help people access even more destinations via transit.	BCDOT does not have a formal role in state transit systems.
BCDOT pushing for more sustainable forms of transportation.	Confusion between DOT, DPW, BGE responsibilities for lighting – <b>the public does not know who is responsible for maintaining or repairing streetlights.</b> When people submit service requests to 311, the city routes the request to the responsible party, but slow response times often means that people still want to know which entity is responsible.
New demographic of people living in City Center – <b>millennials and empty nesters WANT to use public transit.</b>	Implementation of sustainable forms of transportation not happening through out city (though the city’s proposed rules for dockless scooters will require equitable distribution of scooters).
City’s new <b>complete streets policy</b> will redefine typology. Retrofit our streets.	
City transitioning to a permanent program for dockless scooters – opportunity to provide facilities.	
<b>Lexington Market redevelopment creates the opportunity to re-connect the grid,</b> especially a better east-west bicycle connection.	
There is interest in hosting a good, <b>multimodal transit center</b> in the area, to facilitate connections and transfers.	

Although service is often less reliable than the light rail and subway lines, **the Maryland Transit Administration’s (MTA) Baltimore Link buses also serve Market Center**, providing access to the area from many parts of Baltimore City and County. Baltimore and Fayette Streets are major

east-west bus routes, served by the City Link Orange, Purple and Red Lines, with dedicated bus/bike lanes facilitating more reliable service.

City Link Blue runs on Saratoga, and City Link Pink runs on Centre and Madison. Market Center is also served by five local link bus lines (51, 54, 73, 80, and 94), and two express link lines (120 and 150). The free Charm City Circulator Purple Route runs on Charles Street, one block east of Market Center, and its Orange Route runs on Lombard Street, one block south of Market Center.

Unfortunately, the inter-city Greyhound bus terminal which used to be in the heart of Market Center was relocated to a location adjacent to the Horseshoe Casino in South Baltimore. When it was in Market Center on Fayette Street, passengers benefitted from greater connectivity to other transit modes, as well as the walkable location.

The light rail cars have been in service for nearly thirty years and are far from state-of-the-art. Many feel that their size and noise detract from Market Center's physical environment. In addition, the curve in some of the light rail tracks along Howard Street creates a confusing and dangerous situation for drivers and pedestrians.

**Poor lighting and the poorly maintained environment around transit stops are a detriment to transit use and pedestrian perceptions of safety.** This problem is not easily addressed due to jurisdictional and communication issues among the various government and private entities responsible for Market Center's transportation infrastructure and streetscape.

**Market Center's street grid does create "good bones" for an easily navigable environment for pedestrians and bicycle riders.** However, **the conditions of Market Center** – vacant buildings, poor lighting, deteriorating infrastructure, trash, and loitering – **are a significant deterrent** to pedestrians, bicyclists and other forms of micro-mobility.

**Despite this, 40% of people who live in Market Center walk or bicycle to work,** an increase from 2017, when 31% of people in Market Center walk or biked to work. The percentage of no-vehicle households has also increased between 2017 and 2019, from 39% to 42%. The percentage of people who live in Market Center and take public transit to work has declined from 21% to 17% between 2017 and 2019.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Focus Group Input***

Focus group participants repeatedly stated that **Market Center** – despite having many of the necessary characteristics for a walkable community (scoring 98 on Walkscore.com) – **is not pedestrian-friendly.**

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<sup>8</sup> Source: Environics Analytics | Claritas, 2019, courtesy of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore

Participants argued that **Market Center needs a more welcoming and human-scale pedestrian environment**, and that **downtown is designed for automobiles above all else**, making bicycling and walking more difficult. Specifically, people noted that **street crossings are chaotic and poorly signaled, lighting is poor, crosswalks are faded, or nonexistent, and sidewalks are broken**.

The intersection of Liberty, Park, and Fayette was identified as particularly problematic for pedestrians, with five lanes of traffic and uncoordinated signals. **Market Center also needs more curb appeal to encourage pedestrian activity – participants want better lighting, more street cleaning, more greenery, and trees trimmed (so they don’t block lights)**.

Participants noted that it is difficult to drive through Market Center because of the one-way streets, coupled with restrictions on turning due to the presence of light rail on Howard Street. Several people raised the possibility of transforming Park Avenue into a two-way street. **One way to begin to transform Park Avenue would be to remove the rush hour parking restrictions**.

One person suggested that Market Center brand itself as a “ditch your car” community and more directly embrace transit.

Some participants complained that the bike lanes have reduced parking on Liberty/Cathedral and Centre Streets, and that they have backed up traffic on Centre Street. There are concerns that this may be a detriment to businesses in Mount Vernon Marketplace.

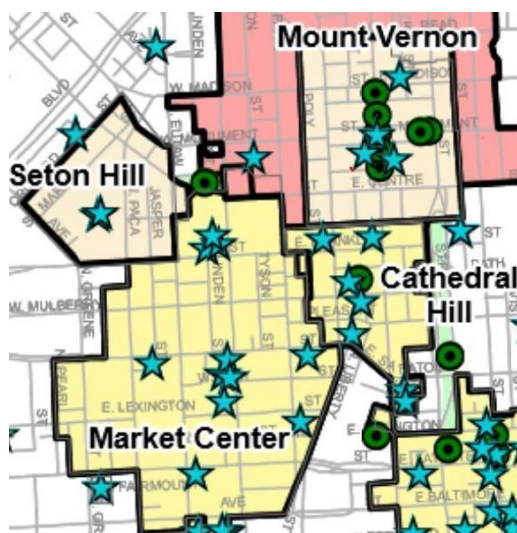
From a macro perspective, focus group participants said that they feel that **the light rail only works to bring people into the city and does not really serve city residents; the subway is insufficient; the bus route changes have forced some people to take two buses** instead of one to reach their destination; and that parking options are limited and expensive. Participants in the Basilica Place focus group stated that the Baltimore Link bus route changes are confusing and deter them from using the bus.

There was a discussion about the parking prohibition on both sides of the 200 block of N. Eutaw Street (between Lexington and Saratoga Streets). According to one participant, it makes the area look nicer and more orderly, but another noted that it hurts business in Lexington Market. **People also expressed interest in revisiting on-street parking restrictions, particularly on Park Avenue, Franklin Street, and Mulberry Street, to allow more on-street parking throughout the day**. There is near-universal support for **changes to on-street parking restrictions on Park Avenue, and broad support for changes to Franklin and Mulberry Streets**. The Archdiocese of Baltimore expressed concerns that eliminating the on-street parking restrictions, particularly on Franklin, will make it more difficult for their employees to exit the Franklin Street parking garage in the afternoon.

## Environment

Though not always considered a traditional component of an environmental discussion, **Market Center's environment is largely defined by its historic building stock.** Market Center is Baltimore's historic retail core, which evolved from an early 19<sup>th</sup> Century neighborhood characterized by row homes along with the region's premiere shopping district, with department stores, banks, and theaters.

**Lexington Market, one of the oldest public markets in the United States, formally opened in 1806 and continues to serve as an anchor for Market Center.** Market Center is also the site of Baltimore's former Chinatown, where the first Chinese settlers in Baltimore and their descendants lived and worked for decades from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s. The original Chinatown was centered on the 200 block of Marion Street, but it later moved to the 200-400 blocks of Park Avenue.



### Market Center touches many historic districts:

Market Center National Register Historic District, the Five and Dime Baltimore City Historic District, the Howard Street Baltimore City Historic District. Several blocks of Market Center are located within the Cathedral Hill National Register Historic District and the Mount Vernon Baltimore City/National Register Historic District.

### Historic Districts In and Near Market Center

*This is a screen shot from the City of Baltimore's website, which does not yet include the two most recent historic district designations: Howard Street and Five and Dime.*

Environment SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
MC has wonderful buildings unmatched anywhere in the city.	Lack of public open space, parks, green space
There is a lot of history and potential here.	No linkages between what little open space exists

Nice architecture	<b>Trash, Grime</b>
<b>Market Center is a very “Baltimore place” with Baltimore iconography and food.</b>	Broken water lines, potholes, broken sidewalks
	<b>There are few parks, placing greater importance on streets and sidewalks to serve as vital open space elements.</b>

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Vacant buildings and lots	Many of the older buildings need careful remediation due to hazardous materials and environmental conditions

**Market Center has very few public parks or communal gathering spaces within its boundaries** except for two dog parks, Howard Dog Park and Liberty Dog Park. Howard Dog Park also includes a small patch of green space across Centre Street which is not specifically for dogs, but it is not well maintained or used.

There are other public parks and plazas near Market Center:

1. University Square Park above the parking garage on the University of Maryland, Baltimore campus. UMMC and UMB host The University Farmers Market at the park on Tuesdays from May through November, and UMMC and UMB faculty, staff, and students use the park primarily during weekday lunch hours. It has the potential to be more well-used.
2. St. Mary’s Park, a 6+ acre oasis in Seton Hill.
3. Center and Hopkins Plazas in Charles Center.
4. Mt. Vernon Square in the Mount Vernon neighborhood

The area has some private green spaces at 200 W. Lexington Street and 206 W. Fayette Street.

**The owners of 200 W. Lexington Street recently allowed public access to the property, and Bromo Arts & MCMA helped to create a public park at the site through the City’s Design for Distancing initiative.** Three years later, the green space at the intersection of Lexington and Park is regularly used by residents, as both gathering spaces and drug activity. The space has hosted arts performances and other community events. However, this is temporary. Both 200 W. Lexington and 206 W. Fayette are likely to be redeveloped.

**Market Center has limited tree canopy/greenery and no gardens.** Flowerpots – some provided by DPOB and others privately owned – offer limited but welcome glimpses of greenery and flowers.

**The area also has limited streetscaping, and what exists is poorly maintained.** As an example, Howard Street has many empty tree wells, which are weed-strewn during the warmer months and lined with largely destroyed or missing courses of brick. The 200 block of N. Eutaw Street has deep tree wells and no tree grates, which is bad for trees and dangerous for pedestrians. **Sidewalks on the 300 block of N. Paca Street are in particularly poor condition.**

### ***Focus Group Input***

**Focus group participants stated that Market Center needs “safe communal spaces” such as coffee shops with more seating, public gardens, usable green spaces, and event space.**

Participants in the residential focus group specifically stressed that they would like Market Center to have public open space that people naturally walk through on their way from one place to another, rather than a park one must specifically set out to visit. **They want public spaces that are integral to the fabric of the street network.** Participants in the UMB student focus group would like more trees and green space

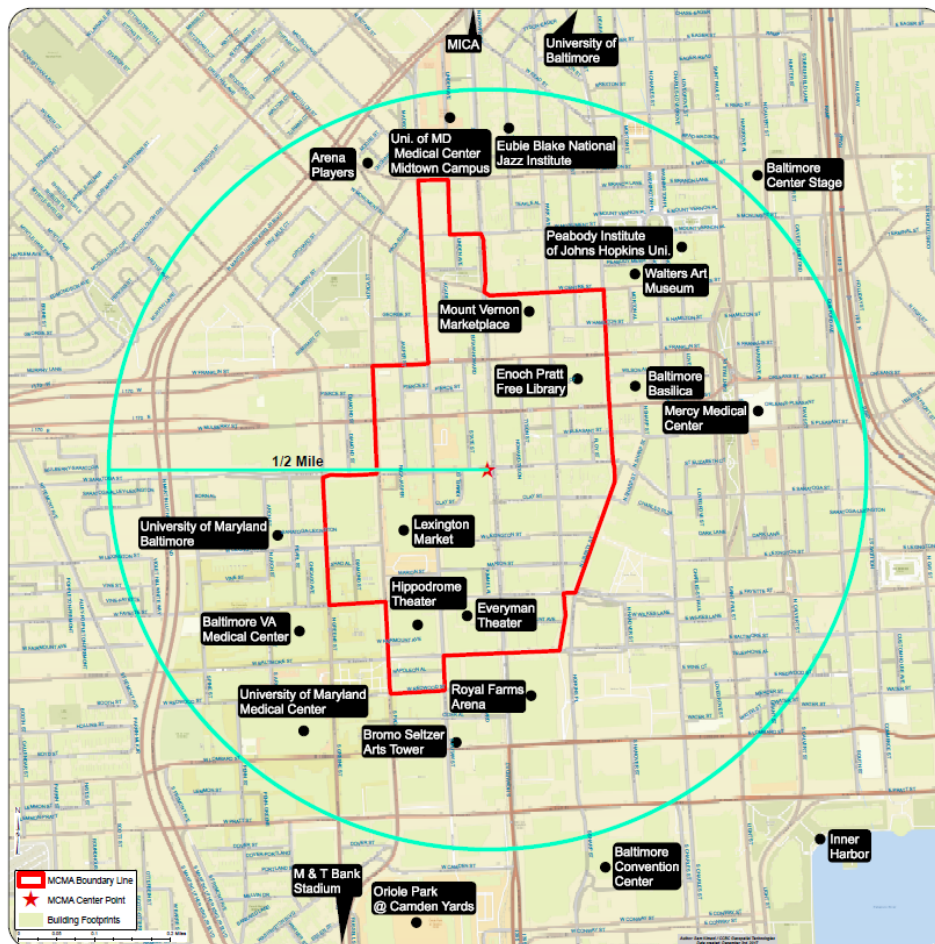
The prevalence of things like broken sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and streetlights, graffiti, faded crosswalks and street markings, broken windows, and dilapidated buildings signals both apathy and neglect by the city. These conditions make it seem acceptable to litter or engage in illegal dumping. **Participants suggested that if the city fixed the broken infrastructure and improved the conditions of the buildings it owns, individuals would be less likely to litter.**

Focus group participants **expressed support for the historic buildings but stressed that they want the buildings to be occupied and used.** The Environmental Workgroup felt strongly that **the historic fabric is an important component of Market Center.**

## Quality of Life

**Market Center is rich in amenities**, including live theater venues and multipurpose arts spaces, attractive historic architecture, and transit, and it boasts unique assets such as the central branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library. The area benefits from nearby assets, too, such as the University of Maryland, Baltimore, multiple hospitals, and arts, entertainment, and sports venues (see Map 6). There are several houses of worship of various denominations within and near Market Center.

**Map 6: Cultural Institutions, Amenities, & Employment Centers within a ½ Mile of Market Center**



However, Market Center also lacks key *community* amenities, such as safe communal gathering spaces (both indoors and outdoors), recreational opportunities and healthy food resources. There is no full-service grocery store in Market Center, and while some Lexington Market merchants carry produce, meat, poultry, and fish, both the selection and hours are limited.

Quality of Life SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Location</b>	Food desert/lack of food resources
<b>Walkability</b>	Overpriced everyday items
Easily accessible; transit hub	Lack of safe meeting space (Senior Center/Community Center)
Certain amenities	<b>Aesthetics &amp; appearance</b>
Diverse population	<b>Poor lighting</b>
<b>Unique urban character</b>	<b>Broken infrastructure</b>
	<b>Feels unsafe</b>
	<b>Blank walls contribute to a lack of safety and no perception of activity in the area.</b>
	<b>Drug market</b>
	Noise pollution
	Lack of affordable parking

Opportunities	Threats
High traffic area with hospitals, etc.	<b>Crime, drug activity, and the perception of same</b>
Vacant buildings/lots (blank slate for new development, amenities, parks)	Significant numbers of people who need help with things like substance use, mental health, homelessness
<b>Space available for shops</b>	<b>Security concerns are city-wide</b>
<b>History, historic architecture</b>	Loitering
Overlapping major stakeholders (opportunity to build collaboration)	Insufficient funding for mobile crisis units, peer-to-peer outreach, trauma-informed care, prevention; inability to bill Medicaid for prevention, crisis intervention services; need to recertify people for Medicaid annually.
Organized activities and gatherings (note that people who do not live nearby are more likely to participate during lunch time or after work/school)	Insufficient transportation from people's homes to care providers.

<b>Incentives to attract grocery stores, other fresh food sources</b> (note: UMB students feel that Hungry Harvest is too expensive, CSA drop off sites would not be helpful; No Boundaries Coalition food hub at Avenue Market is a good model; some use grocery delivery services). They like farmers markets.	Insufficient awareness of programs that do exist
<b>Opportunity for more businesses and places that appeal to students and improve their quality of life</b> (food/beverages/breweries/ice cream/coffee/places to study.	.Housing insecurity – makes it more difficult for people to keep themselves well.
Harm reduction and safe injection sites	

Public safety/comfort is another key factor in a community's quality of life. The amount of loitering and other disorderly behavior, drug dealing and use, trash, grime and graffiti, poorly maintained infrastructure, and vacant buildings and storefronts all contribute to a sense of unease throughout much of Market Center. **Concerns about public safety are common.** Whether the threat is real or perceived, the impact is undeniable, because people avoid walking through Market Center due to these concerns.

In a 2019 survey of Market Center residents, safety concerns were the top reason for not shopping or dining in Market Center more frequently. In this same survey, **66.7% of respondents rated Market Center Fair or Poor on safety and cleanliness.**

In addition to the Baltimore Police Department, the following entities have a security presence in parts of Market Center: Lexington Market, UMB, Maryland Transit Administration, and Maryland Department of General Services (in buildings occupied by state agencies). DPOB deploys "Downtown Baltimore Guides" to provide a visible, positive safety presence throughout downtown, and DPOB also sometimes contracts with private security companies to supplement law enforcement and the Downtown Baltimore Guides. **Despite the existence of multiple entities whose mission is at least in part to keep Market Center safe, safety concerns are among the most frequently cited frustrations with Market Center.**

Most Market Center stakeholders recognize that **additional police presence is neither feasible nor the only way to address concerns about public safety.** Other recommendations for improving public safety also include transforming vacants into occupied buildings, eliminating trash and graffiti, enhancing lighting, hosting events and activities (such as Bike Party), improving access to health care, and addressing the underlying factors which contribute to people engaging in criminal activity (such as lack of opportunity and jobs, housing insecurity).

## Post 114 / Market Center Coalition

Recognizing **the need for a holistic, community-based, and coordinated approach to improving public safety**, in 2019, MCMA, DPOB, Paradise Management, and Seawall (the developer hired by the City of Baltimore to redevelop Lexington Market) formed the Post 114/Market Center Coalition (“Post 114”). Post 114 included 100+ individuals and representatives of organizations and entities with responsibility for or interest in improving public health and safety in Market Center in order to guarantee success of the new Lexington Market. The group adopted the following guiding principles:

- **HOLISTIC** – Work on multiple issues (safety, cleanliness, opioid dealing, business development, etc.) at the same time by partnering with organizations from different sectors with different levels of expertise.
- **COMPASSIONATE** – Act with compassion, treat people fairly and justly, focus on solving the issues, not attacking people.
- **EFFECTIVE** – Focus on real life results and impact, identify what works and what doesn’t, learn and adapt, provide adequate resources and people to address the issue.
- **SUSTAINABLE** – Improvements must take root and last beyond the construction and opening of Lexington Market.
- **ACCOUNTABLE** – All partners, including community members, are responsible for making Lexington Market a safe, welcoming, family friendly destination.
- **INCLUSIVE** – Diversity is valued, and people of all backgrounds are part of the decision-making process.

Post 114 included the following action committees: Appearance & Cleanliness, Baltimore Police Department, Behavioral Health, Business Health, Communications, Partner Connections, and Transit. The committees met regularly and coordinated work as appropriate.

*Note: The Post 114/Market Center Coalition disbanded in Spring 2023.*

Input from organizations and entities including Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore, G.R.O.W., B.E.A.M., Second Chance Behavioral Health Services, Youth Empowered Society, the Downtown Partnership Homeless Outreach Team, and individuals with relevant lived experience is critical to understanding how to address underlying conditions that contribute to housing and economic insecurity, homelessness, unemployment, and substance use disorder. Post 114 aims to build relationships with youth and community members that live, reside, and work Downtown to foster healthy relationships, create improved safety conditions, and provide the workforce training, health care, and social services needed to support long-term success.

Recognizing the pervasiveness of drug activity in Market Center and acknowledging that drug use is a public health crisis, the **City of Baltimore selected Market Center as the pilot location for its Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program (LEAD), which began in 2017.** The LEAD program allows public safety officials to work with behavioral health providers by diverting low-level drug offenders to treatment and support services, rather than into the legal system. To date, more than 250 individuals have been referred to the program, and there are 67 active participants. The program does have a positive impact on the people it helps, but it is harder to measure the impact it has had on the community. **Drug dealing and abuse is still prevalent in Market Center.**

The LEAD program is only part of a solution, however. People need to have access to a wide range of effective, culturally competent care, including prevention, inpatient and outpatient treatment, and stabilization. There is insufficient funding for programs, particularly prevention, and there is a need for increased peer-to-peer outreach and mobile crisis units.

**People also need to know about the programs that do exist and how to access them.** The aforementioned issues are interrelated with housing and transportation. Access to safe, affordable housing is important to help people in recovery because it is hard to maintain wellbeing without housing. People also need reliable transportation to access care providers as well as jobs and schools.

### ***Focus Group Input***

Focus group participants expressed concerns about public safety, persistent drug activity, the possibility of getting contact highs, panhandling, loitering, homelessness, litter, poor lighting, and poor pedestrian conditions. They like the convenience of Market Center, value its history and architecture, and need/appreciate the transit access. **They want more safe communal gathering spaces (inside and outside), as well as a grocery store.**

**Security concerns impact how people spend their time.** Some people who work in Market Center never venture outside of their office to run errands or go to lunch. Others map their route based on where they feel comfortable walking.

Given the prevalence and visibility of drug use without any apparent consequences, people wonder what else is “allowed to just go on,” in the area. Even if the concerns about public safety are overstated, as one person feels, **it is still necessary to solve the problem of both the reality and perception of crime.** At the same time, UMB focus group participants cautioned against removing people from the area who are not harming anyone.

One group noted that Market Center **needs a better engagement strategy with police,** citing the fact that in other communities, officers attend community meetings. Basilica Place focus group participants said that they would appreciate having a strong relationship with a community engagement officer from the Baltimore Police Department.

Most participants acknowledged, however, that **police presence alone will not solve concerns about public safety**. They understand that societal issues contribute to criminal activity and drug use, and that security concerns are citywide. Therefore, in addition to continuing to advocate for more effective police, **Market Center stakeholders recognize that they can take other actions to address public safety concerns, such as increasing the number of people on the street to reduce feelings of insecurity, improving lighting, and keeping the area cleaner**. UMB focus group participants said that with the amount of people who need help in the community, there should be an active social service agency nearby.

## Community Engagement

**Market Center stakeholders, from the people who live and work here to business and property owners, currently have limited opportunities for engagement.** This may be a byproduct of the fact that until recently, Market Center was viewed simply as an amalgamation of businesses and institutions, rather than a community with potentially strong constituencies.

Community Engagement SWOT Analysis	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Multicultural and multipurpose (workers, residents, students, veterans, visitors) population in Market Center</b>	<b>Lack of cohesive community vision</b>
Strong base of residents, workers	Lack of cohesive community voice
New residents' association; growing residential population	No clear way to reach multiple stakeholders yet
Multiple entities working in area	<b>Lack of cohesion and effective communication between multiple stakeholder organizations</b>
Reach of various newsletters (ex., DPOB)	Lack of engagement with the faith community, youth
	Little understanding of the needs of the transient population that come for services, shops, jobs
	Fear of being excluded from the process, discussions about future of the community.

Opportunities	Threats
New Lexington Market could become a community meeting space that will attract all sorts of people.	Unknown plans of property owners (particularly owners of vacant buildings and lots)
There is an opportunity to shape the community.	Perceptions of racial and socio-economic status discrimination as development happens.
Lots of development occurring in Market Center.	<b>Negative perceptions/narratives about Market Center</b>
<b>Untapped potential – people live downtown for a reason.</b>	
There is an opportunity to strengthen existing associations, such as CCRA	
<b>New attractions, festivals, energy (ie., Charm City Night Market)</b>	
Proximity to City Hall	

Multiple nonprofit organizations and institutions work in Market Center, including the Bromo Arts & Entertainment District, City Center Residents Association, Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, Market Center Community Development Corporation, Market Center Merchants Association, and University of Maryland (immediately adjacent to Market Center). These organizations offer the following opportunities for engagement:

#### 1. Market Center Community Development Corporation (MCCDC)

MCCDC was established in November 2017, and its mission is to make investments to catalyze a healthy, dynamic, and diverse community in Market Center, encourage community development, and galvanize the renaissance of Baltimore’s historic retail core. MCCDC does not currently have a structure for public participation and community engagement but anticipates helping to fulfill the need for ongoing, active community engagement as defined by this plan.

#### 2. Market Center Merchants Association (MCMA)

MCMA was formed in 1983 and operated as an all-volunteer organization until September 2016, when it hired its first and only staff person. MCMA’s mission is to promote commerce, retain and attract business, and enhance the customer and residential experience. It has three committees on which the public is welcome to participate: Safe & Clean, Community Development, and Marketing. The meetings are held during the workday, which may work for some business and property owners, and other stakeholders, but is not likely to work well for residents.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, MCMA hosted monthly Market Center mingles, which aimed to bring a wide variety of stakeholders together in a social atmosphere, foster the

formation of new relationships, and encourage participants to craft their own agenda and work together to achieve their goals.

**3. City Center Residents Association (CCRA)**

Formed in 2016, CCRA serves and supports the City Center neighborhood by building community among residents, engaging all stakeholders, advocating for residents, and promoting Baltimore's City Center.

**4. Downtown Partnership** – Downtown Residents Advocacy Network, Events, Newsletter

**5. Bromo Arts & Entertainment -**

*Focus Group Input*

**Participants in every focus group raised questions about community branding and identity.**

Market Center is called not just Market Center, but also Bromo, City Center, the Westside, and sometimes Mount Vernon. **People expressed the need to strengthen the community's identity.** Participants had different opinions about which name might be more readily embraced by the current Market Center community and which resonates more with people outside the community. One participant suggested different names for sub-geographies within the community.

Beyond the name, **participants also stressed the need for a cohesive vision for the whole neighborhood**, one which establishes a vision of what the neighborhood could be. Property owners, residents and business owners should be engaged in this visioning. (Note: That is what this SRP process aims to do.) One participant stated: "This neighborhood has yet to be defined, and everyone should work together to make Market Center something special." **It is critical to figure out what makes Market Center unique and use that to build its identity**; to correct the misconceptions that there is nothing of value here; to get honest, positive messages about the area out to the public.

Similarly, participants in every focus group questioned the presence and impact of multiple organizations working in Market Center. **They want to make sure that all of the local organizations here complement and strengthen each other, and that they are working toward the same goal** – rather than working at cross purposes, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Several participants noted the confusion that sprung from being invited to different meetings about similar topics, and by different groups.

Focus group participants **also expressed a desire for a reliable source of information about news and events relevant to the community, as well as an ongoing vehicle for community engagement.** They suggested hosting regular meetings so people can get to know each other and talk about issues, stressing that no one should be left out.

UMB students prefer email notifications to text. Basilica Place residents prefer flyers and may be interested in participating on committees.