



Cherry Hill Strong

REVEALING THE STRENGTH OF CHERRY HILL

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Cherry Hill Joins National Network of Purpose Built Communities in Transformation

BACKGROUND

Cherry Hill is located across the Patapsco River’s Middle Branch—about 300 acres just South of the Hanover St. bridge—from the Federal Hill neighborhood and downtown Baltimore. Over the years since its founding in the early 1940s, the community has produced a host of prominent lawmakers, educators, entertainers, along with a sense of pride equal to any one of Baltimore’s unique neighborhoods. Growing up in Cherry Hill has meant growing up in a “village” where families come together to raise their next generation.

The story of Cherry Hill begins, however, in America’s racist past. It was one of America’s first planned, segregated, Black communities. Racist attitudes and policies like restrictive covenants, redlining, a segregated schools at the time were central to the decision to build housing for returning World War II Black veterans... somewhere other than near white communities.

So, Cherry Hill was born on the undeveloped, undesirable, polluted southern waterfront atop a “potters field” (indigent burial ground). Most of the 600 new units were public housing—for rent, not to own. (For nakedly racist reasons, Blacks did not benefit from the GI bill, which provided low-interest loans and free college education and job training to white veterans.)

The community of some 8,000 residents faces many challenges.

There now are 3,100 housing units in the community, 85 percent of which are rentals, and 1,394 of those units are public housing—the City’s largest concentration of public housing.

Approximately 55 percent of households earn less than \$25,000 per year. Grocery options are limited as is public transportation. Only 36 percent of adults have a high school diploma. All of the children are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Historically, students have performed well below statewide averages. Data from 2019 shows that 5 percent were proficient in reading and 3 percent were proficient in math. Despite significant 40 percent improvement since 2009, Baltimore’s Black infant mortality rates remain higher than for whites and premature deaths among Black residents are at a ratio of 1.8 to 1 for white residents.

The past 80 years of inequity, under investment, and systemic obstacles have prevented the community from achieving its potential. Yet Cherry Hill residents and community leaders have set forth their vision for the future in the 2020 Cherry Hill Transformation Plan, which today forms the basis for a community-led, holistic, place-based strategy to create a thriving Cherry Hill.

A timeline toward transformation

In 2017, then State Senator Bill Ferguson introduced Cherry Hill leaders to Purpose Built Communities with a visit to Atlanta’s Lakeland neighborhood.

Residents wrote the Purpose Built Communities model into the 2020 Cherry Hill Transformation Plan, which was adopted by the Baltimore City Planning Commission.

In 2021 Cherry Hill Strong was established as the neighborhood’s community quarterback organization; charged with engaging the community, coordinating efforts and investments across the Purpose Built Communities’ pillars.

In January 2024, Cherry Hill Strong’s Board of Directors approved a three-year Strategic Plan that spells out objectives and strategies for each its four pillars.

The Purpose Built Communities national Board of Directors approved Cherry Hill Strong’s application for membership in March of 2024.

Governor Moore signed the ENOUGH Act into law on May 9, 2024.

Governor Moore proclaims May 22, 2024 Cherry Hill Strong Day in Maryland.

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