

NEIGHBORHOOD OPEN  
SPACE MANAGEMENT:  
  
A REPORT ON THE  
VACANT LOT  
RESTORATION PROGRAM  
IN BALTIMORE

A PUBLICATION OF THE  

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PARKS & PEOPLE FOUNDATION

Fall 2002

SPONSORED BY THE  
BALTIMORE CITY  
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING  
AND COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT

September 12, 2002

Commissioner Paul T. Graziano  
Baltimore City Department of  
Housing and Community Development  
417 E. Fayette Street, Room 1346  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Mr. Graziano:

RE: Vacant Lot Restoration Program (DHCD Contract # 26838)

Enclosed is a report titled "***Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on the Vacant Lot Restoration Program in Baltimore***" that evaluates the accomplishments and challenges of this program your department has funded over the last four years. In 1998, the Parks & People Foundation joined with your department to assist the former Neighborhood Projects Coordination Division and the nine Neighborhood Service Centers in a public-private partnership to demonstrate methods for involving community residents in helping to care for neighborhood vacant lots that constitutes urban open space. This evaluation and assessment is the last obligation we have under the current contract's scope of work. On September 15, this program will unfortunately come to an end unless your department is able to continue assisting us by providing resources to sustain this cooperative effort. I would appreciate meeting soon to review the Vacant Lot Restoration Program accomplishments and determine how we can continue our partnership in the future.

The Vacant Lot Restoration Program has been an ambitious program working to enable over 350 people in 30 very different and geographical dispersed communities to take on care of 127 vacant lots. Overall, the Vacant Lot Restoration Program has been successful given the accomplishments to date of the 35 community projects selected as part of the program. The Vacant Lot Restoration Program has been especially productive this last year by planting 154 trees, 227 shrubs, 1050 ground cover and flower plants in 2530 linear feet of raised beds, moving and placing 358 tons of soil and mulch, creating 400 linear feet of walkways and 2080 linear feet of fencing, establishing 8 bio-retention systems to improve water quality, and arranging for the painting of 4 community art murals. This year's accomplishments occurred by Vacant Lot Restoration Program staff providing 2440 hours working on-site, matched by 1610 hours provided by community volunteers and 828 hours by other volunteers.

The Parks & People Foundation has worked in Baltimore for over a decade helping underserved, inner-city residents green their communities and restore vacant lots by creating neighborhood gardens and other green spaces, planting street trees, and establishing tree nurseries. The Vacant Lot Restoration Program was established based on a need to have a citywide program that offers training for community organizing and project implementation, technical and logistical assistance, plant materials and tools, and other help for residents to create community managed

open space using vacant lots. The Vacant Lot Restoration Program was designed to pursue four goals: 1.) organize and strengthen community interest and capacity, 2.) strengthen coordination among non-profit organizations; 3.) formulate supportive public policies and improve coordination by city agencies, and 4.) train and involve DHCD Neighborhood Services Center staff.

We have prepared in addition to this report two companion documents that represent our experience and knowledge in the field of community managed open space. These include the earlier publication titled "*Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore and Six Other Cities*" distributed in the spring of 2000. Another very useful document is at the printer now and will be available soon. It is a manual to guide community residents in understanding how to care for community open space and restore vacant lots called "*Greening Neighborhoods - Creating and Caring for Community Open Space.*" We are very proud to share all of these documents with you, your staff and the Baltimore community.

The Parks & People Foundation has been grateful for the assistance of the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development for its support and funding. This experience helped us to improve our greening strategies as noted in the enclosed report. We believe it is essential to continue the Vacant Lot Restoration Program and adopt improvements recommended in this evaluation to meet the needs of neighborhood residents willing to manage community open space so as to immediately improve the quality of life and to stimulate the revitalization in these neighborhoods.

I look forward to scheduling a meeting soon to review the Vacant Lot Restoration Program accomplishments and determine how we can continue our cooperative relationship. Should you or your staff have questions regarding this report, please contact me or Guy Hager at 410-448-5663. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline M. Carrera  
Executive Director

CC:  
Ms. Joann Copes  
Assistant Housing Commissioner

Mr. Michael Bainum  
Director, Project 5000

Carol Amanze  
Chief, Contracts Section  
Fall 2002

# **Report on the Vacant Lot Restoration Program in Baltimore**

Prepared by the Parks & People Foundation for the Baltimore City  
Department of Housing and Community Development

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## Overview:

Baltimore's population of nearly a million people in the 1950's is reduced today by one third. As a consequence, the abandonment and demolition of unoccupied housing has resulted in approximately 17,000 vacant houses and more than 13,000 vacant lots. The vacant lots are a burden to everyone, from the city agencies forced to take care of them to the communities who must live with unsightly properties that frequently become weed infested dumping grounds and drug havens. On the other hand, the number of vacant lots could provide an opportunity for attractive and functional community managed open space, or at a minimum, must be adequately maintained to give underserved, inner city neighborhoods a chance at revitalization. Though some communities receive modest assistance from city agencies, on a daily basis, they encounter barriers to their stewardship efforts as a result of the policies and procedures of city agencies. These barriers hinder community stewardship, cost the city money, and foil the positive efforts of many willing citizen stewards. If city officials wish to pursue setting goals in the future relating to vacant lot management, they can gain invaluable insight and knowledge by reviewing the accomplishments and challenges of the Vacant Lot Restoration Program (VLRP).

The Parks & People Foundation (PPF) has been working in Baltimore for over a decade helping underserved, inner-city residents green their communities and restore vacant lots by creating neighborhood gardens and green spaces, planting street trees, and establishing tree nurseries. These efforts were initially undertaken in collaboration with the City Department of Recreation and Parks, which was often assigned responsibility without resources for abandoned residential properties when the city was forced to assume ownership. These earlier efforts were initiated through a three-way partnership called the Urban Resources Initiative that included faculty and students of the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, the City Recreation and Parks Department and the Parks & People Foundation.

In late 1997, the Parks & People Foundation proposed a public-private partnership to the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which at the time was aggressively demolishing abandoned houses and rapidly creating vast areas of open space in inner-city neighborhoods without a program to help remaining community residents cope with this burden. The Vacant Lot Restoration Program (VLRP) was established based on a need to have a citywide program that offered training for community organizing and project implementation, technical and logistical assistance, plant materials, and other help for residents who wished to create community managed open space using vacant lots.

In April 1998, the Vacant Lot Restoration Program was officially established through an agreement between PPF and DHCD to assist communities and DHCD's Neighborhood Service Center staff in managing vacant open space through application of the Department of Public Works' (DPW) Adopt-A-Lot Program. With DHCD funding assistance, PPF was able to provide community organizing, technical assistance, training, site improvement resources, and project management.

The VLRP was to pursue four goals: 1.) organize and strengthen community interest and capacity, 2.) strengthen coordination among non-profit organizations; 3.) formulate supportive public policies and improve coordination by city agencies, and 4.) train and involve DHCD Neighborhood Services Center staff.

The VLRP strategy was to encourage residents to “adopt-a-lot” and turn them into gardens or green spaces (parks, tot lots, and other possible community users are not permitted as a part of the City’s Adopt-A-Lot Program because of liability concerns). The program concept called for community groups to propose large open space projects (i.e., greater than 4,000 square feet or the width of three row house lots) that ranged from passive sitting spaces to gardens. To select the community projects that would become part of the VLRP, an Advisory Committee was created that included staff of DHCD and PPF.

Initially, during 1998, ten community vacant lot projects were selected; in 1999, an additional ten projects were included and later another four lots totaling the original 24 projects that constituted the basis of the three DHCD agreements, spanning four years. In the first two years, DHCD and PPF promoted the VLRP and selected community project sites, held training classes and workshops, and created partnerships with other non-profits. In the second two years, the PPF continued to focus on community organizing, networking and developing relationships with other organizations, assisting community groups with physical restoration of vacant lots, actively seeking additional resources for program implementation and exploring new implementation strategies following the elimination of DHCD’s Neighborhood Service Centers. By September 2002, in a shift in strategies, the VLRP was providing assistance to 30 community groups who were caring for 35 vacant lot projects affecting a total of 127 vacant lots, an average of three vacant lots per project.


The VLRP was an ambitious program undertaking to empower over 350 people in 24, and later 30 very different and geographical dispersed communities, so as to provide stewardship in establishing and transforming vacant lots into green and functionally useful community managed open space. Overall, the Vacant Lot Restoration Program has been successful given that 21 of the original 24 community projects selected as part of the program have accomplished several stages in the restoration process over as many as five semi-annual planting seasons and community groups undertaking to care for the projects into the future. The VLRP staff and community volunteers have been very productive in that they have together on all 127 lots planted 154 trees, 227 shrubs, 1050 ground cover and flower plants in 2530 linear feet of raised beds, moved and placed 358 tons of soil and mulch, created 400 linear feet of walkways and 2080 linear feet of fencing, established 8 bio-retention systems to improve water quality, and created 4 community art murals. This work was accomplished with 2440 hours by VLRP staff, 828 hours by outside volunteers, and 1610 hours by community volunteers.

Throughout the process of implementing the VLRP, PPF has been grateful for the assistance of the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development for its support and funding. However, the VLRP was weakened by the recent DHCD reorganization, which resulted in the elimination of the Neighborhood Service Centers and the Neighborhood Projects Coordination Division, as well as the Department of Public Works (DPW) relocation of the Adopt-A-Lot program from the Bureau of Solid Waste to the Property Locations Unit in the Bureau of General Services. The VLRP was designed with the intention of strengthening both of these city operations.

Additionally, the city public policy and institutional changes recommended as a part of this program (see *Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in*

*Baltimore and Six Other Cities*, Spring 2000) have not been implemented as of this time, resulting in little significant citywide change in the dynamics of creating and maintaining community managed open space. This is even more discouraging in that fundamental institutional changes have not occurred since the University of Maryland's Community Planning Studio prepared a report in the fall of 1995 called *Community Managed Open Space on Vacant Property in Baltimore*, both stating the case for and proposing a public-private partnership for managing vacant lots.

Recently, as a part of Baltimore City's Neighborhood Planning Process, the Planning Department surveyed neighborhoods that have completed community plans. When asked to state short-term, implementable goals, 11 of the 20 surveyed communities identified the importance of community greening through vacant lot restoration and maintenance, street tree planting, and other beautification projects doable with community resident participation.

Why is transforming unsightly vacant lots to community green space so important? A recent study by a Cornell researcher suggests a house surrounded by nature helps boost  child's attention capabilities. "When children's cognitive functioning was compared before and after they moved from poor to better quality housing that had more green spaces around, profound differences emerged in their attention capacities even when the effects of the improved housing were taken into account," said Nancy Wells, assistant professor of design and environmental analysis in the College of Human Ecology. "The findings suggest that the power of nature is indeed profound. The results suggest that the natural environment may play a far more significant role in the well being of children within a housing environment than has previously been recognized," Wells said.

In conclusion, it is essential to continue the Vacant Lot Restoration Program and adopt improvements recommended in this evaluation based on four years of experience to meet the needs of neighborhoods that are capable of managing community open space, and ultimately, to stimulate the revitalization of these fragile neighborhoods.

#### Vacant Lot Restoration Program Premise:

In 1997, based on nearly ten years of experience by PPF's Community Foresters and Urban Resources Initiative interns in 1997, the VLRP was established based on the following premise:

Community residents, properly motivated, trained and supported by city agencies and non-profit organizations, can assume maintenance of many, if not all, neighborhood vacant lots/open space, thereby reducing city agency costs, improving the neighborhood physical appearance of vacant lots, and increasing neighborhood social capital by better organizing communities to undertake community managed open space projects.

#### Program Goals:

Four program goals were initially developed for VLRP based on the proposals prepared by PPF and adopted by the VLRP Advisory Committee. They include the following:

1. To organize and mobilize community interest and strengthen neighborhood capacity to create and maintain community managed open space/vacant lots through training,

- providing plants, other materials and tools, community organizing, and project technical assistance and training, including horticultural advice, landscape design, and contractor assistance.
2. To strengthen coordination among non-profit organizations which play a role in open space/vacant lot management.
  3. To formulate supportive public policies and improve coordination and services provided by several city agencies, including Housing and Community Development, Recreation and Parks, and Public Works.
  4. To train DHCD Neighborhood Service Center staff to support community-based open space/vacant lot management.

Project Selection Criteria:

The VLRP community open space project selection criteria developed by the VLRP Advisory Committee and approved by DHCD incorporated the goals into a workable program. To be selected for assistance by the VLRP, community groups were required to do the following:

1. Secure written permission to use the vacant lot through the city's Adopt-a-Lot program; the lot was required to be titled to the city or one of its agencies.
2. Identify a vacant lot with sufficient size to warrant public investment; the minimum vacant lot size was established to include the area of three row houses or about 4,000 square feet (40x100 feet); a positive visual impact on the community resulting from the project was the primary interest.
3. Identify a minimum of fifteen people who were required to formally agree to support the project; the extent of community support was anticipated to be a key to a successful project and to ensure the community was willing to maintain the project.
4. Identify at least three residents who agreed to attend 20 hours of special project training provided by VLRP staff; participating residents were expected to have had previous experience in similar projects to ensure success.
5. Work with the applicable Neighborhood Service Center to complete a project application form including site design and materials list.
6. Work with assistance from VLRP staff to prepare a project site improvement plan, including a sustainable maintenance plan.

If these conditions were met and the community application accepted by the VLRP Advisory Committee, the program offered community groups training, technical assistance, and initially \$1500 and later \$2000 for plants, other materials and tools for each project. Fostering leadership development and training residents about the long-term maintenance required on their site was felt to be critical for the success of the projects; therefore, projects were intentionally divided into phases to occur over time, providing the opportunity to monitor the capacity of the community to manage their projects.

Program Timeline:

April 22, 1998 – First VLRP contract signed by DHCD and PPF

March 8, 2000 - Second VLRP contract signed by DHCD and PPF

Spring 2000 – Published “*Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore and Six Other Cities*,” a policy report prepared by PPF

February 16, 2001 - Third VLRP contract signed by DHCD and PPF

September 2002 - Program Evaluation prepared by PPF  
September 2002 – Published “*Greening Neighborhoods: Creating and Caring for Community Open Space*,” a manual for community groups prepared by PPF

Program Cost Summary:

From April 1998 to September 2002 (58 months), the total program cost was \$379,639. Costs can be averaged as \$7163 per month or \$2989 per lot for 127 vacant lots or \$10,846 for 35 projects sites over 58 months or \$187 per project for each month or \$2505 for each of the 35 project sites per year. See appendix for annual budgets. These funds provided for the planting of 154 trees, 227 shrubs, 1050 ground cover and flower plants in 2530 linear feet of raised beds, moved and placed 358 tons of soil and mulch, created 400 linear feet of walkways and 2080 linear feet of fencing, established 8 bio-retention systems to improve water quality, and created 4 community art murals. This work was accomplished with 2440 hours by VLRP staff, 828 hours by outside volunteers, and 1610 hours by community volunteers.

Program Accomplishments:

Overall, the Vacant Lot Restoration Program can be described as “successful” given that 21 of the original 24 community projects selected as part of the program have accomplished several stages in the restoration process over as many as five semi-annual planting seasons and community groups are caring for the open space projects. In a shift in strategies in 2002, the VLRP added 11 more projects in successful communities ready to work on additional vacant lots. For 32 of these projects, the physical restoration process has been completed and long-range maintenance plans developed with community stewards. Many communities have experienced success in restoring and maintaining their vacant lot projects. The two factors appearing to greatly affect the success of projects involved the social capital developed in communities and the effectiveness of community leaders. It is, however, clear based on the experience of this program, that ongoing organizational support, training, recognition and encouragement are essential for sustaining these projects in most of the participating communities. It is critical to view project timelines as organic, and to adapt to meet changing physical and social conditions in the participating communities where the VLRP focused their efforts. For example: weather conditions as well as changing city and community leadership can disrupt the best-laid plans. Progress is not measured in a straight line.

The VLRP was an ambitious program undertaking to empower over 350 people in 24, and later 30 very different and geographical dispersed communities, so as to provide stewardship in establishing and transforming (designing, building, and maintaining) 127 vacant lots into green and functionally useful community managed open space. The VLRP staff and community volunteers have been very productive in that they have together on all 127 lots planted 154 trees, 227 shrubs, 1050 ground cover and flower plants in 2530 linear feet of raised beds, moved and placed 358 tons of soil and mulch, created 400 linear feet of walkways and 2080 linear feet of fencing, established 8 bio-retention systems to improve water quality, and created 4 community art murals. This work was accomplished with 2440 hours by VLRP staff, 828 hours by outside volunteers, and 1610 hours by community volunteers.

Given the experience of how long it usually takes the city to accomplish capital improvements, it is only through the persistence and energy of participating community groups and VLRP staff

that this project has moved forward, particularly, within the context of city government reorganization and shifting priorities resulting in a weak public-private partnership. Many of the policy and institutional challenges and barriers we identified at the beginning of the VLRP remain to be resolved for the benefit of community groups who do want to restore and maintain vacant lots as part of their neighborhood open space. Nonetheless, we feel several neighborhoods have been strengthened with regard to community managed open space projects through the efforts of the VLRP and many other programs as well.

Defining Program Success:

The VLRP did not explicitly define a successful project. However, from the program premise (stated above) and past practice of PPF, we can describe the difference between a successful and unsuccessful community open space projects as:

**Successful Project**

Community driven idea  
Accepted as part of the community  
Many doers, some planners  
People-power comes from community  
Community takes the initiative  
Evolves through stages and seasons  
Increase in horticulture skills  
Improved environment  
Gains official recognition  
Shares knowledge with others

**Unsuccessful Project**

Idea imposed from outside  
Used only by a few people  
Too few doers, too many dreamers  
People-power comes from outside  
Community waits for assistance  
1<sup>st</sup> stage finished, does not evolve  
Not willing to learn skills needed  
No beneficial environmental change  
No one cares or recognizes  
No interaction with others

There are a few factors not included in the list above that should be identified, because they are often suggested as criteria for defining successful projects. These include the physical appearance of the site (maintenance standards), quality of materials used in the restoration, and elaborateness or uniqueness of project design. In our opinion, these should not be used as success factors, although sometimes viewed as highly desirable attributes, because the community does not have control over these factors and they are both subjective and culturally bounded. A green space that is a garden will not always look the same over time and is often at times “out-of-season.” This does not excuse poor gardening practices, but not all gardens need to look like those on private estates. The quality of design and materials should be appropriate for the intended use and consistent with the standards of particular communities as quality often varies depending on different values and priorities of communities. In other words, not all paths need to be paved with gold or brick, when gravel will functionally do and can be as eye appealing, depending on the context of the site improvements.

Success Factors Reviewed:

The following is a narrative review of the success factors as experienced by the VLRP:

*Community driven idea*

All VLRP projects were chosen from among those proposed by community groups. However, the VLRP suffered from inadequate public notice in the early stages of the program, so the projects selected were not necessarily the best possible projects potentially available, but rather

the best of those submitted through the Neighborhood Service Centers. As the community began to plan for the improvement of the site selected, voices from outside the community influenced the Neighborhood Design Center (NDC) volunteers who produced the site designs.

*Accepted as part of the community*

Some projects achieved the broad neighborhood-wide support desired as evidenced by the number of people in the community actively committed to the projects. However, an adequate number of people involved did not occur in all communities. It is felt that this resulted from the way projects were solicited and reviewed for selection. Rather than looking for communities with a demonstrated track record of successful community managed projects, the process was open to anyone willing to submit an application. More time should have been invested in the initial stages of recruitment and selection by meeting with the individuals in the community proposing the project to check out the depth of community support and commitment as well as knowledge and experience. Often the problems with community commitment were not discovered until after the Advisory Committee had selected the project and VLRP staff felt they could not abandon the community or project site. Instead, more energy was spent on encouraging and helping with community organizing, or too often, VLRP staff ended up doing too much of the work, being seen as a “city crew.”

*Many doers, some planners*

Many of the projects suffered from too many community residents who were eager for a transformation to occur on a vacant lot without understanding or being physically able or willing to spend the necessary time involved in both community organizing and the actual physical labor involved in accomplishing a transformation. We have experienced the effect the social and economic problems prevalent with inner city neighborhoods have had in undermining opportunities for creating successful community managed projects. The time and resources necessary to overcome these challenges were not available. VLRP staff changes also did not help the in sustaining community organizing efforts.

*Manpower comes from community*

Many projects were able to muster sufficient community residents to participate in the planning and physical activity of the site improvements, but not enough strong, young people from the local community were willing, without compensation, to undertake community managed projects. Almost all project sites were physically more demanding as a result of the condition the sites were left in following housing demolition. If the DHCD inspectors were able to require the city demolition contractors to leave a site as specified in DHCD contracts, the site would have been far easier to work with. Consequently, it was necessary for VLRP, other PPF staff as well as Civic Works, NDC and outside volunteers on occasion to supplement resident efforts. At some site locations, it became apparent that there were so few people left in an area or that the lot was so far away from anyone’s house that interest in the lot was not strong enough to sustain the effort needed to accomplish its transformation.

*Community takes the initiative*

Many of the wonderful people we worked with are willing to do the work, although not necessary able physically. Those involved and committed to the project are so pleased with what they have been able to do that they are often motivated to take on more vacant lot projects.

Unfortunately, some people misunderstood the VLRP as a city public works project, because it was promoted through the Neighborhood Service Centers. Some community residents thought that someone else would do the project for them, or substantially do it for them. It was difficult to change this attitude once it was established.

*Evolves through stages and seasons*

This aspect worked well in that gardening or greening projects must by necessity evolve over several seasons with more done or added with each planting season. Some people were frustrated by what they saw as progress occurring too slowly; others enjoyed the creative nature of this process.

*Increase in horticulture skills*

Through the training provided by VLRP and other PPF programs and the actual experience of those involved, we feel there has been a positive learning experience achieved. Some people involved have advanced in their knowledge of horticulture; a few people did not progress at all.

*Improved environment*

This can be broken down on several levels and again be separated by the demographics of the participating neighborhoods. For the immediate local level; removal of trash, rats nests, and ailanthus trees has an immediate effect reducing unpleasant smells emanating from vacant lot as well as affecting the health and well being of local residents, i.e., allergies and other health hazards. Trees planted on the lots can reduce the temperature, provide shade and give areas for the community to gather. For many community project participants, it was important to work towards a greater common goal of incorporating environmental and ecological practices that affect a “big picture” way of thinking, providing a greater sense of personal fulfillment for the participant.

*Gains official recognition*

With the exception of a few projects, official recognition has not been achieved, and was initially not felt necessary. One of the lessons learned by VLRP staff was the positive motivating power recognition from authority figures has in most inner city communities. This aspect needs to be re-enforced and properly planned for in future projects including identity signs, acknowledgement ceremonies, and incentive programs.

*Shares knowledge with others*

We have witnessed sharing occurring through VLRP training and efforts to get community project organizers together for such exchanges; for example, at annual Community Greening Celebrations organized by PPF.

Program Challenges Encountered:

Based on the above set of success factors, we consider many of the projects to have been wonderful, exciting and some even innovative experiences for the community residents and VLRP staff. However, there were several challenges encountered in implementing this program including:

1. The number of community applicants was low initially, despite mass-mailings and recruitment by the city Neighborhood Service Centers. The vacant lot projects selected by the Advisory Committee were not necessarily the best sites or the communities that were experienced and ready to undertake community managed open space projects. In retrospect, the program would have developed more effectively if it had evolved from PPF's Community Grants program, rather than establishing a new and separate initiative.
2. Many of the vacant lot projects were much more difficult than anticipated with regard to the extent of the physical work involved, primarily because of the condition of the sites left by DHCD contractors as part of the previous housing demolition work. This rendered the sites impossible for the community members who initially volunteered to do the work, and subsequently, required younger and stronger outside volunteers to undertake the work needed to prepare the site for planting by working and improving the soil condition.
3. Another factor involved is the time it takes for greening efforts to occur after housing demolition. The community will quickly identify the site as either a dumping ground or potentially a beautiful green space. Once established, this view becomes an expectation that takes hold within the community. This also plays a role in restoration efforts. The longer the delay in working on a newly demolished site, the more the soil quality degrades resulting in an increase in time, resources, and labor needed to establish a desirable green space.
4. All projects required far more VLRP staff involvement than originally anticipated in both the physical work, in part, because of the reason stated above and additionally, as we were not able to secure on a sufficiently consistent basis, either city agency or contractor assistance with heavy equipment and materials on site such as soil amendments.
5. We had difficulty securing the number and type of contractors we had expected to use because of their refusal to work in the neighborhoods needing assistance based on their security concerns and lack of interest in "small" projects.
6. VLRP staff were required by the nature of the program's rhythm and design to spend many more hours than anticipated, when community project leaders did not fulfill their role in organizing resident participants for workdays, which required VLRP staff to repeat preparation steps several times and contributed to the sense that progress was slow at best.
7. Finally, VLRP staff spend much time continually encouraging and training community residents to engage in the project as a consequence of the transient and economically under-privileged nature of the communities selected for project implementation and as a result of VLRP staff turnover during the four year period, attributed in part to the uncertain nature of DHCD funding support.

### Assessing Program Goal Achievement:

The VLRP was designed to achieve four goals:

Goal 1: To organize and mobilize community interest and strengthen neighborhood capacity to create and maintain community managed open space/vacant lots through training, providing plants, other materials and tools, community organizing, and project technical assistance and training, including horticultural advice, landscape design, and contractor assistance.

The Baltimore community is poised to blossom with regard to community managed open space, community greening, and gardening in general. Indicators of community interest and capacity include the following:

1. We have formally identified and surveyed over 80 community gardens and another 30 individually managed flower and vegetable gardens and have not finished our search, as we know there are many more existing and more to come in Baltimore City.
2. Over 600 Revitalizing Baltimore and Community Grants for greening projects have been undertaken through other Parks & People funding and we have more project grant applications than we can fund or staff.
3. Our programs consistently attract 50 new people per seasonal training session and about 70 people consistently attended a nine-week advanced horticulture and gardening training last winter.
4. We are increasingly approached by previously uninvolved organizations, particularly community development corporations, seeking assistance related to organizing and initiating community greening projects in their communities.
5. The city's Adopt-A-Lot program has between 50 to 100 agreements on file even though the program is not actively promoted and annual follow up is not occurring.

The VLRP worked with a large number of people over a relatively short period of time providing technical assistance and training. This was positive and has resulted in increased community capacity and strengthened organizational relationships. On the other hand, the VLRP experienced inconsistency with regard to the community resident participation, particularly the more difficult and less successful projects. Some communities were clearly not ready to undertake a greening project even though they recognized the problems created by unmanaged vacant lots and wanted to affect positive change in neighborhood conditions.

Too often, community residents saw the VLRP as a city government project because of the direct involvement of the DHCD Neighborhood Service Centers, and therefore, as a way of securing city resources to solve problems in their community. Some community residents find it difficult to accept the limitations or the geographically unequal provision of basic city government services and are not ready to accept community stewardship in lieu of city services. This is not the case, however, in all communities. The VLRP needs to be better able to screen communities that are ready to implement community managed open space projects.

Smaller steps need to be undertaken with each community as a way of building acceptance and capacity. Availability of community volunteers and weather conditions demand a greater degree of flexibility in scheduling than is normally permitted. Program timelines also need to take into consideration community issues of vandalism, theft, drugs, illegal dumping, and occasionally,

even city trash truck destruction of community projects, the future viability of projects is not in the hands of community residents alone.

Another issue that points out the inadequate screening of projects at the beginning of the program is site ownership. We recently reviewed the property records for the 127 VLRP vacant lots and were surprised to find that only 46 of the 127 are currently owned by the city. As city property ownership was a requirement of acceptance into the program, we are at a loss to explain why DHCD NSC did not research this fact at the time of application screening. Only 3 of the 24 original projects are entirely in city ownership.

Additionally, VLRP staff turnover was not helpful in maintaining program consistency and sustaining community organizing efforts. It takes time to train staff to undertake the community greening work from a community organizing approach, rather than a landscaping approach. Community organizing, particularly in obviously struggling communities is essential for sustainability of the project.

Overall, we feel the community has been strengthened with regard to community open space projects, part of this strength has come as a result of the VLRP and many other programs as well.

Goal 2: To strengthen the coordination among non-profit organizations who play a role in vacant lot/open space management.

A VLRP Advisory Committee was established in the summer of 1997 and met several times at the start of the program to discuss its scope and time frame. PPF organized several presentations for DHCD staff about community greening strategies in September and November 1997 and January and August 1998. As the VLRP Advisory Committee was initially quite large, a work group was formed to prepare for a Neighborhood Open Space Public Forum held in March 1999. At this public forum, Advisory Committee members and other interested citizens discussed ideas for improving the way neighborhood open space is managed in Baltimore. Following the forum, the Work Group synthesized research and ideas discussed at the forum into a series of recommendations for improving community managed open space efforts in Baltimore. The Advisory Committee also participated in the selection of the lots to be included in the VLRP and met on a regular basis to discuss program progress until significant reorganization of DHCD eliminated the city staff directly working on this program.

PPF and NDC held a second public forum on Vacant Land Management on December 14, 2000, to discuss the Operation ReachOut SouthWest (OROSW) land management approach and the issue of vacant lots in general. PPF also helped organize and present at a community forum on vacant lots and land trusts held on September 28, 2001, sponsored by the Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative, and a follow-up meeting organized by PPF on November 2, 2001, with community residents, non-profits, and community development corporations, sponsored by the Maryland Fund for the Environment of the Baltimore Community Foundation. DHCD staff did not attend any of these forums, although encouraged to participate by PPF and NDC.

Existing relationships were strengthened with Civic Works, Neighborhood Design Center, Community Law Center, and Forestry Division of Baltimore City Recreation and Parks

Department. VLRP also developed new partnerships with the Maryland Office of Employment Development, Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods, the Baltimore City Police Department, the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Department of Public Works, US Forest Service, Malcolm X Youth Center, and Baltimore Gas and Electric to address community issues such as job training and employment, neighborhood safety, economic development, forestry, and illegal dumping.

While the VLRP Advisory Committee has not formally met since the DHCD reorganization last year, the vacant lots issues have continued to be addressed by two citywide coalitions, one focused on community greening strategies and the other on community gardening support. The community greening strategies have been a focus of the Revitalizing Baltimore project – a USFS funded national model community forestry and watershed organizing collaborative - with 17 public and community organizations involved in this partnership. The vacant land management strategy developed by Operation ReachOut SouthWest (OROSW) and new outreach initiatives to community development corporations, such as Greater Homewood Community Corporation, Druid Heights Community Development Corporation, and People's Homesteading Corporation, and empowerment zone organizations, such as Washington Village, have been strengthened through the technical and funding assistance of the Revitalizing Baltimore project (RB). New strategies and approaches to community greening, including vacant lot restoration, have been pursued through RB, such as the comprehensive community greening demonstration in Franklin Square, an OROSW neighborhood.

The Baltimore Urban Greening Alliance (BUGA) is a group that includes 15 community organizations, neighborhood associations and gardening groups in the city. This group has addressed specific problems faced by VLRP and other greening groups such as water access, site conditions after housing demolition, street tree pit cutting, and securing property owner permission to maintain vacant lots. Both RB and BUGA groups have met with many city officials including the Mayor, the Mayor's Office of Economic and Neighborhood Development and Office of Neighborhoods, and the Departments of Public Works, Recreation and Parks, and Housing and Community Development to plead for better public policy to overcome the barriers to community gardening and greening, with very little change resulting from these efforts.

The VLRP tested the "mettle" of city and non-profit organizations to work together. Until one or more city agencies is willing to become a cooperative partner and to take responsibility for solving the vacant lots problem and able to share information and resources, the problem of communications and coordination of action and resources among city and nonprofit organizations will continue. At different times, depending on staff abilities and funding availability, various nonprofits including PPF, NDC and Citizen Planning and Housing Association have tried to take the lead in resolving policy issues with city agencies and to coordinate nonprofit activities. Generally, nonprofits are not currently funded to sustain these efforts, given their project oriented funding that comes and goes. PPF has recommended that the city establish a Neighborhood Open Space Council to help improve communications and coordinate activities and stimulate needed public policy changes. This recommendation might have been implemented if the city Planning Department's efforts to draft a comprehensive plan called "PlanBaltimore" had been approved and implemented.

While several nonprofits involved in VLRP share similar interests and goals of serving inner city neighborhoods and seek to help increase the physical and social capital of these underserved neighborhoods, this program has pointed out that we sometimes do not agree on approach and technique. For example, NDC and its professional volunteers have a far higher expectation of what community groups are currently capable of doing with regard to physical work illustrated through the elaborate and expensive project designs they developed for VLRP community projects. This resulted in community expectations being raised beyond the capacity of the VLRP staff and the community with regard to what they could accomplish. This created the impression that the community would “receive” this improvement as proposed by NDC volunteers. This became a major problem for the VLRP staff, requiring them to re-negotiate with some community groups over the first phases of site improvement, causing delay and dissatisfaction in some communities. This strained the relationship between PPF and NDC with the realization that we sometimes do not share the same values. The NDC volunteers found it difficult to work within the limited site improvement resources and community capacity. NDC volunteer landscape architects additionally did not accept the VLRP’s ecological approach to vacant lots restoration preferring traditional landscape design approaches. Civic Works training crews was also often not able to perform when needed, and while the VLRP successfully worked together with Civic Works crews on some sites with community volunteers, we grew to be careful about our expectations of what Civic Works crews could accomplish.

On the other hand, the VLRP allowed time for the various non-profit organizations and some city staff who were interested in working together on this problem to discuss and work through differences and resolve to create a more comprehensive approach to vacant lot management. This effort evolved into the Operation ReachOut SouthWest (OROSW) Vacant Lot Management and Community Greening Strategy that has been presented to DHCD for implementation. It also resulted in OROSW, NDC and Civic Works being invited to join and become actively involved in the PPF managed Revitalizing Baltimore project. The OROSW strategy deals with three weaknesses in the VLRP design including: 1.) the geographically scattered nature of project sites across the entire city with one project site in 24 neighborhoods, 2.) the difficulty of a small non-profit staff to know the social and political dynamics of 24 very different communities and their residents when the NSCs were eliminated from the program mix, and 3.) the realization that we needed to approach the large number of vacant lots in different ways with greening treatments and maintenance strategies depending on their physical condition and location within the community, which can define different uses and functions for specific vacant property.

The physical isolation of many of the VLRP lots within the neighborhood and their large size helped to militate against effective community maintenance. Often, the vacant lots chosen for the VLRP, once improved, had very little impact on the livability or quality of the community. The OROSW strategy establishes a hierarchy of vacant lots by looking at their location and value in changing the appearance and functioning of the community in which they are located. Also, the physical distance of the VLRP lots from each other made it difficult for the VLRP staff to effectively assist community groups both from a social interaction perspective as well as the time required to travel from one site to another. The VLRP approach to widely distributing site and resources militated against building on successful community efforts to tackle additional lots. The VLRP has experimented with aspects of the OROSW approach in its last six months and reports that this strategy can work effectively, if the program can undertake improvements at the

pace the community finds feasible. Too few and too many resources in one location may not work depending on the readiness and energy of the community volunteers.

Targeting a particular community as we have done in Franklin Square and Greenmount has proven to be a better strategy in part because the organizers can really get to know the residents living and working in that neighborhood, so as to help ensure successful projects. Inner-city neighborhoods have complex social systems that take time to build trust and understanding, so as to become an effective change agent working with the community. The VLRP must work from a community-organizing base that is sustainable to help train and guide community residents with undertaking community managed projects like vacant lot restoration.

The development of the OROSW land management strategy helped several non-profits, including PPF, realize that not every vacant lot need be turned into gardens or special community social spaces. We learned that some could be private space like side-yards, that some may be treated as gateways, and that some may be treated with minimal “clean and green” efforts. The keys to a successful strategy are: 1.) inventory the community’s green infrastructure and relate to an open space plan that is consistent with overall community revitalization goals, 2.) identify different uses and functions for different vacant property to fit into a mosaic useful to the community, and 3.) target investment of resources and time to those sites with potential for positive effect on the livability and health of the community. Within this broader community value context, it then is easier to get more people involved in implementing the vacant lot management strategy and sustaining vacant property for a variety of community uses, one of those being greening, gardens, etc., but other community or private uses may be as helpful and legitimate, provided issues of liability and ownership can be overcome..

Another aspect of the OROSW land management strategy that we have grown to accept, is the job of maintaining a large number of vacant lots within a specific neighborhood will require other approaches so as to aid residents in undertaking these efforts. The training and employment of youth or other adult work crews is believed to be essential for future success on a scale equal to the extent of the citywide vacant lot problem. How these crews are created and sustained is the question of the day. We feel our experience with VLRP points to hiring youth with sound adult direction and supervision from within the community where the vacant lot management strategy is being implemented. We also believe the adult supervisor of the youth crew should be responsible for helping to organize the community for project implementation, so the effort is a joint one that is both multi-generational as well as one shared by paid staff and non-paid volunteers.

Another approach to vacant lot maintenance worthy of consideration is to examine the opportunity for the School Grounds, Recreation and Parks, Housing and Community Development, and Public Works to integrate their contracted land and housing maintenance on a neighborhood basis so the same contractor is undertaking school, park, and vacant house and lot maintenance in a particular neighborhood that could be supplemented by community volunteers, paid youth crews, and private contractors and developers. In one VLRP project, a local contractor/developer extended a VLRP mural to his property, further beautifying the area. The contractor also took over maintenance of this vacant lot in the hope of acquiring the city-owned, vacant lot adjacent his property. We recommend exploring these options in the future.

Finally, through interaction with OROSW and other community development corporations, we have grown to believe these community-based organizations can be helpful and may be able to initiate and sustain VLRP strategies in their communities as part of the effort to improve livability and housing conditions. This option must yet be tested, but we have initiated this effort over the last six months in Greenmount and Druid Heights with their respective CDCs.

Goal 3: To improve coordination and formulate supportive public policies and services to be provided by several city agencies, including Housing and Community Development, Recreation and Parks, and Public Works.

A major strain on the VLRP project has consistently been the inadequate involvement of DHCD staff. After DHCD's reorganization last year, this problem grew to the point of minimum communications between VLRP and DHCD. DHCD has shown little interest in championing policy changes that could strengthen the VLRP and has not been willing to tackle the citywide vacant lot problem head on. Also, DPW has been ineffective in helping with equipment or resolving the problem of water needed at some project sites. The Department of Recreation and Parks has been the more helpful and consistent city agency partner by sharing facilities, equipment, and materials. The VLRP developed a sound working relationship with the Recreation and Parks Department, although we have had occasions when things did not go as planned.

Goal 4: To train DHCD Neighborhood Service Center staff to support community-based open space and vacant lot management.

This goal was pursued, but became irrelevant when all nine of the DHCD Neighborhood Services Centers and the Neighborhood Projects Coordination Division were abolished mid-point in the VLRP process. The VLRP was designed with the intention of strengthening both of these city operations. VLRP held several training sessions with DHCD NSC staff prior to the elimination of the unit and had hoped the training would help improve the effectiveness of the staff. We have since offered training and undertaken to work with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods. While this Office has expressed interest, they have not been able to respond to our offers to work closely together to help solve vacant lot problems as this Office responds to mayoral priorities.

The VLRP training focused on preparing community volunteers to undertake vacant lots restoration planning, implementation and maintenance. PPF has published a manual for neighborhood open space, called "*Greening Neighborhoods: Creating and Caring for Community Open Space*," funded by other sources that can serve both community volunteers and VLRP staff in the future. This document is planned for printing and distribution through future training efforts. VLRP training needs to be further improved and strengthened so as to be continuous and hands-on, focusing on implementation of specific projects. It also needs to be broadened to include other knowledge such as mapping and survey, resource development, legal and design. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on education of community volunteers and professional site designers on how to work with nature, instead of against ecological forces. VLRP needs to be careful that its expertise does not become something the community depends on, as there is no guarantee that VLRP will be there for them on an ongoing basis.

### Policy Issues Reviewed:

This is a summary of the status of key public policy issues recommended for change to overcome the barriers to community managed open space projects on vacant lots identified in the PPF report, *Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore and Six Other Cities* distributed in June 2000:

1. Recommendation - Change current Baltimore City policies and procedures to create an efficient and effective program of mixed city and community managed open space and support community greening:
  - a. Tasks Accomplished:
    - i. A central database of vacant lots has been created by DHCD, although we have found errors as we field-test the data. PPF has started a survey of community gardens, but a more comprehensive inventory of property under community management has not been prepared.
    - ii. Procedures for public acquisition of abandoned property has been accelerated by the city with community groups able to participate by working with the Community Law Center.
    - iii. Property laws, including the lien process, have been revised giving the city more flexibility in disposing of private property.
    - iv. Management of the city's Neighborhood Incentive Program has been transferred to the Baltimore Community Foundation.
  - b. Tasks Not Accomplished:
    - i. The Adopt-A-Lot program was not overhauled, but lingers in DPW divorced from the city's new disposal procedures.
    - ii. User-friendly brochures regarding the city Adopt-A-Lot Program have not been prepared, although brochures were prepared for the VLRP.
    - iii. A city interagency vacant lot work group was not been created as proposed by the City Planning Department.
    - iv. A land trust, similar to Chicago's NeighborSpace program, has not been accepted by the city administration for implementation; nor has the city acknowledged the Charm City Land Trusts, leaving community groups with few options in dealing with land ownership and liability issues.
2. Recommendation - Improve city maintenance of city-owned and privately owned vacant lots.
  - a. Tasks Accomplished:
    - i. Mayor has organized neighborhood clean up efforts involving DPW coordination among multiple community groups ready to go to work.
  - b. Tasks Not Accomplished:
    - i. Options for interagency, coordinated contracting have not been pursued.
    - ii. Assess to water on vacant lot sites has not been resolved.
    - iii. Meeting DHCD housing demolition specifications remains a problem, although the rate of demolition has slowed with lack of funding.
3. Recommendation - Actively support community organizations working with neighborhood groups to turn vacant lots into open space.
  - a. Tasks Accomplished:

- i. DHCD has provided limited funding for community efforts, but more needs to be done in relationship to adopting a strategy for land maintenance and natural resource management.
  - ii. PPF has developed a neighborhood green infrastructure survey and mapping technique and process and is working toward development of open space planning process with community development corporations.
- b. Tasks Not Accomplished:
  - i. PPF has a tool trailer for use by community groups, but originally DHCD NSCs were to establish a neighborhood-based, tool-lending program.
  - ii. Opportunities to identify or create new funding sources for nonprofit support have not been pursued by the city.
  - iii. City legislation supportive of community greening to deal with vacant lots has not been developed.

Recommendations for Strengthening the Program:

We have learned a great deal through our participation in the VLRP and based on this experience, the program can be improved. This evaluation and assessment has been a useful activity and hopefully this document can be used to share what we have learned about community managed open space. In summary, the elements that need to be kept in mind when changing or improving the VLRP include the following:

- 1) Clarify roles, secure interest and commitments from all parties critical to program success.
  - a) Define the government agency roles, point of contact, policies and services and secure agreement in writing for provision of resources as needed.
  - b) Create a strong working partnership among all parties that will withstand differences of opinion and approach, agreeing ahead of time on a clear decision-making process.
  - c) Improve communications among participating nonprofits and government agencies to improve responsiveness and efficiency.
- 2) Stewardship and volunteer efforts to create community managed open space can be a positive community building experience, but may not fit all circumstances or conditions in each community.
  - a) Stewardship is a local process best started on a block-by-block level.
  - b) Time is needed to build trust and a cooperative work environment that encourages participation.
  - c) Many people feel really good about greening their neighborhood and sharing pride in accomplishing hands-on projects to help people re-establish positive experiences in their communities.
  - d) Good stewardship projects lead to empowering residents and agency personnel who can share responsibility and accountability.
  - e) Community greening investments can happen more quickly than housing and economic development projects, but can also set the stage for these additional investments.
  - f) Some communities may need youth work crews to help sustain community volunteer efforts.

- 3) Targeted and comprehensive neighborhood approach is preferred to scattered site approaches.
  - a) Work through community-based organizations, including community development corporations, that know local residents and have a stake in sustaining community managed open space.
  - b) Ensure community readiness and properly assess community capacity; if low, develop program steps to improve readiness and capacity over time.
  - c) Projects should be selected that have real value to community livability and can be built on over time; incorporate into a community greening strategy and action plan.
  - d) For organizing, logistical, and efficiency reasons, projects should be concentrated and grow organically.
  - e) Target areas should be selected carefully, with planning work done in advance with hands-on project opportunities tackled as time affords and as an aid to help with community organizing.
  - f) Develop program and plan for sustainability of projects from the process beginning.
  
- 4) Resources
  - a) Participating nonprofits involved in the program must all be assured of funding on an on-going, long-term basis; year-to-year uncertainty does not lead to well planned and adequately paced implementation.
  - b) Amount and quality of materials needs to be improved and the timeliness and process of assisting communities with delivery of materials needs to be improved.
  - c) The site budget need to be increased to accomplish the designed desired by communities and recommended to better ensure permanency of installation.
  - d) Resolve ways of providing water to sites and improve the condition that DHCD contractors leave sites after demolition.
  - e) Establish method of loaning tools to communities or create tool banks strategically located among targeted communities.
  
- 5) Put Communities First
  - a) Build on community ideas and priorities; value and use local resident knowledge.
  - b) Help residents map assets and resources and build on community traditions and strengths.
  - c) Incorporate social issues into the greening projects to deal with crime reduction, drugs, trash, education, recreation and social space needs.
  - d) Develop a program that provides both economic relief (compensate local resident work crews) and a skills training and education element. Find appropriate organizations to supervise and manage work crews such as community development corporations, empowerment zones, main street or community benefit districts.
  
- 6) Sustain Community Leaders
  - a) Improve hands-on training and teaching in the field as well as classroom training and technical assistance delivery.
  - b) Encourage people to problem-solve and support leaders to emerge.
  - c) Help get youth organized and identify adults interested in mentoring.
  - d) Help structure tasks starting with small steps by creating checklists of doable, hands-on activities.

- e) Provide opportunities for networking and socializing; help make the hands-on activities fun.
- 7) Increase Effectiveness
- a) Develop a recruitment process that ensures community readiness and provides training and mentoring.
  - b) Do a better job of recruiting and organizing volunteers and identifying viable community open space projects.
  - c) Prepare training and educational materials relevant to the needs and encourage questions.
  - d) Create an incentive and awards program and organize celebrations to provide acknowledgement and recognition; invited elected officials and other business and institutional leaders.
- 8) Improve Evaluation
- a) Create measurable outcomes and agree on a way to monitor progress on an ongoing basis.
  - b) Use peer assessments to strengthen projects and exchange information and knowledge among communities and organizations.
  - c) Monitor the effective use of volunteers and agency time and resources.
  - d) Capture great stories about real people improving their communities and share with others.

## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A**

### **Summary of Vacant Lot Restoration Program (VLRP) Annual Progress Reports Submitted to the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development by Parks & People Foundation**

#### **VLRP Agreement # 24505 (April 22, 1998)**

Funding Source: Community Development Block Grant Funds for \$66,120

PPF Staff Involved: Sally Loomis, Patricia Pyle, Bryant Smith, Steven Johnson, Damien Stokes and Kristen Humphrey.

DHCD Staff Involved: Dennis Taylor, Reginald Schriber, and Neighborhood Service Center directors.

Scope of Services: Parks & People Foundation (PPF) shall hire a Vacant Lot Restoration Coordinator (full-time) and a Vacant Lot Restoration Intern (12-week position) to develop a citywide strategy for dealing with the growing problems of vacant lots in Baltimore City. Said strategy shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- 1) PPF shall establish a Vacant Lot Advisory Committee with DHCD.
- 2) PPF shall coordinate and conduct training sessions for staff members of the Neighborhood Service Centers, which will provide general information on the adopt-a-lot process, the available resources, information on the application process for the Vacant Lots Restoration Initiative and basic steps on creating gardens and parks on vacant lots.
- 3) An application for community groups to request assistance with a vacant lot project will be developed and distributed through the Neighborhood Service Centers.
- 4) Work with the Neighborhood Service Center staff and the Vacant Lot Advisory Committee to recruit applications to the Vacant Lot Restoration Initiative and assist them in the application process. Provide guidance to the Neighborhood Service Center staff in selecting the top 3-5 applicants from their Service District.
- 5) Conduct site visits to top projects recommended by each Neighborhood Service Center.
- 6) Work with the Vacant Lot Advisory Committee to review and select 10 community groups to receive assistance from the Vacant Lots Restoration Initiative Program.
- 7) Organize and conduct Lot Tender training sessions for community groups to learn how to create and maintain gardens or parks on vacant lots. Training will include information on project planning, design, implementation and maintenance as well as how to recruit and organize volunteers.
- 8) Work with selected community groups to design and develop a plan for their open space/vacant lots project that will be suitable for the community and is appropriate for the site.
- 9) Work with each community to carry out the selected project and provide technical assistance for each phase of the project.
- 10) Develop a project maintenance plan that can be carried out by community volunteers.
- 11) Develop a set of how-to-manuals for conducting different types of greening projects.

#### Summary of Accomplishments from Final Report dated July 2, 1999:

VLRP was formally initiated in April 1998 and proved immediately to be an excellent learning experience for city agencies, non-profits, and community groups. A VLRP Advisory Committee was established in the summer of 1997 prior to the program being formally initiated and met several times at the start of the VLRP to discuss its scope and time frame. PPF held a series of

community presentations to share the results of our research about other cities' greening programs and to educate Advisory Committee members about community greening efforts in Baltimore and discuss options for policy changes in Baltimore. Presentations included September 1997 presentation on community and city open space management practices in Baltimore; November 1997 presentation on community greening activities in Philadelphia; January 1998 presentation on PPF's Community Forestry Program; and August 1998 presentation on Community Greening practices in six other cities with speakers from the City of Chicago participating and sharing their success with program NeighborSpace.

As the Advisory Committee was quite large, a program Work Group was formed to prepare for a Neighborhood Open Space Public Forum held in March 1999. At the public forum, Advisory Committee members and other interested citizens discussed ideas for improving the way neighborhood open spaces are managed in Baltimore. Following the forum, the Work Group synthesized research and ideas discussed at the forum into a series of recommendations for improving urban and community forestry efforts in Baltimore.

PPF created and printed the VLRP application and brochure working with DHCD Visual Communication unit. Assisted by Reginald Scriber, PPF organized presentations and later training sessions for a lead staff person from each of the nine Neighborhood Service Centers, so they would be able to perform their role in development of the program. Following the training, the NSC staff began to promote the program and recruit interested community groups. In June 1998, Steven Johnson was hired as VLRP assistant intern. Site visits were conducted for the 20 possible vacant lots projects submitted. The Advisory Committee selected 10 community groups to enroll in the VLRP. Representatives of the 10 groups attended the VLRP training workshop held on August 18, 1998. Training included learning how to organize their community for the project, selection of plant materials, and landscape design of the sites assisted by the Neighborhood Design Center. The training included development of a project schedule for undertaking the site improvements. Some of the community residents also participated in a trip to Philadelphia to tour restored vacant lots projects. After the training, VLRP staff began to work with community groups to complete their vacant lot projects. This report included individual status reports for each of the 10 project sites.

**VLRP Agreement # 26042 (March 8, 2000)**

Funding Source: Community Development Block Grant Funds for \$110,000

PPF Staff Involved: Sally Loomis and then Mary Roby, Patricia Pyle, Bryant Smith, Damien Stokes, Craig Brower and Kristen Humphrey

DHCD Staff Involved: Dennis Taylor, Reginald Schriber, and Neighborhood Service Center directors.

Scope of Services: Same scope as above continuing established activities and adding 10 and later 4 more community vacant lot projects.

Summary of Accomplishments from Final Report dated September 11, 2000:

PPF coordinated and conducted meetings of the VLRP Advisory Committee. The PPF published the report *Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore and Six Other Cities* in June 2000, and presented the report to DHCD senior staff and later to the community in July 2000, at the PPF 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Greening Celebration.

The recommendations for Baltimore City were also presented to the Mayor and the Director of Housing and Community Development. Policy recommendations were prepared and submitted to the Planning Department, which included them in the draft Plan Baltimore Comprehensive Plan for the city. This plan was not considered for adoption by city officials, and an initiative by the Planning Department to establish a Vacant Land Work Group under the direction of the Mayor's Environmental Council failed to be supported by city agencies. The City Administration subsequently abandoned the Environmental Council.

The VLRP Advisory Committee participated in the selection of the lots to be included in the program and met on a regular basis to discuss progress of the program. PPF distributed information about the VLRP at community meetings as well as through mailings handled by the Neighborhood Service Centers. Applications for the second round of projects were accepted through the NSC who recommended sites. Applications were also accepted directly from community groups. PPF coordinated and conducted training sessions about the VLRP that included information about the city's Adopt-A-Lot Program managed by the Department of Public Works and basic instruction on creating gardens, parks and other open space uses for vacant lots. With assistance of the VLRP Advisory Committee, all applicant sites were visited and the Committee selected 10 sites and later 4 more for inclusion in the program. PPF organized and conducted "Lot Tender" training for community groups involved in the 10 sites selected providing information about design, planning, and phasing of projects. VLRP staff collaborated with the Neighborhood Design Center to provide design assistance to the community groups for each project site. VLRP staff communicated on a regular basis with each community group regarding their project's progress, obstacles, and accomplishments. PPF solicited responses from construction contractors in accordance with MBE/WBE requirements. PPF met with representatives of DPW to develop an "equipment calendar" that resulted in some assistance for project sites requiring heavy equipment. VLRP staff collaborated with the DHCD sign division to develop a signage program for vacant lots, although this was not implemented because of shifting DHCD priorities. PPF staff worked to develop an "Open Space Manual" to provide community groups with helpful information to guide them in creating open space projects on vacant lots.

**VLRP Agreement # 26838 (February 16, 2001)**

Funding Source: Community Development Bond Funds for \$203,519

PPF Staff Involved: Guy Hager, Amanda Cunningham, Rebecca Ebaugh, Frank Klein, Kim Erickson, and Patrick Nau.

DHCD Staff Involved: Dennis Taylor, Reginald Schriber, and Neighborhood Service Center directors until units abolished in June 2001.

Scope of Services: Continue to focus on the original 24 community vacant lot sites selected as part of the VLRP and specially accomplish the following:

- 1) Parks & People Foundation (PPF) shall hire Vacant Lot Restoration Program staff and restructure program staff to support PPF community organizing, education, and technical assistance.
- 2) PPF shall coordinate training sessions for Neighborhood Service Center staff.
- 3) PPF shall maintain, expand and strengthen the role of the VLRP Advisory Committee for project oversight.

- 4) PPF shall develop formalized partnerships with DHCD, Neighborhood Design Center, and Civic Works to facilitate projects. PPF shall work with selected community groups to design and develop a plan for their open spaces that will be suitable for the community and appropriate for each site.
- 5) PPF shall conduct site visits to project sites.
- 6) PPF shall collaborate with each community to prepare a maintenance plan for each site and provide technical assistance to carry out selected projects.
- 7) PPF shall continue to provide technical assistance through distribution of the Neighborhood Open Space Manual that will connect community groups to additional financial and other resources.
- 8) PPF shall conduct an evaluation of the program and inform Baltimore City about open space management policies and practices.
- 9) PPF shall continue to develop a set of how-to-manuals for conducting different types of greening projects.

Summary of Accomplishments from Final Report dated June 30, 2002:

VLRP focused on four areas of program development during this agreement period including community organizing, networking and developing relationships with other organizations, assisting with physical restoration of lots, and actively seeking additional resources for program implementation. The original 24 community open space projects, selected with assistance from the Advisory Committee for participation in this program, involving approximately 115 vacant lots were completed as well as adding another 15 lots in targeted success communities for a total 127 vacant lots finished. Eighteen of the original 24-community projects are currently active with community residents maintaining the restored lots. Six projects are located in communities where there have been problems sustaining community interest, although residents in three of these communities recently expressed interest in undertaking additional open space restoration activities.

The additional 15 lots were addressed in 6-targeted communities to build on successful projects in Ashland, Barclay, Carroll, Druid Heights, Franklin Square and Reservoir Hill. These communities requested VLRP assistance with open space projects in their neighborhoods. Work began by meeting with established community-based organizations such as the Greenmount Community Planning Council and Druid Heights Community Development Corporation to explore how vacant lot restoration can be an integral element of their redevelopment strategies. Partnerships were formed and the VLRP assisted in comprehensive revitalization efforts in these communities. Community Development Corporation's (CDC) with funding, staff, and equipment have the human resources, organizational capacity, and supplies necessary to maintain additional lots. As a direct result of these efforts, the Greenmount area has witnessed a drop in crime activity at the corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> and Barclay Streets, a former open-air drug market. A new partnership was created with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and Civic Works at the vacant lot on the northwest corner of Greenmount and North Avenue, site of two major bus stops. This unsightly, city-owned vacant lot, which also lacks bus patron amenities, called for temporary landscaping improvements until this site is redeveloped for commercial use. PPF forged a partnership with MTA's Civic Works Landscaping Crew to work with VLRP and Greenmount in addressing this problem site.

In Franklin Square, PPF has undertaken a pilot comprehensive greening strategy implementation as our part of the Operation ReachOut SouthWest (OROSW) vacant lot management and community greening strategy through the treatment of vacant lots, street trees, parks and schoolyards. Funding for this project was provided by grants from the US Forest Service and Chesapeake Bay Trust with work done in a manner to complement the VLRP site in this neighborhood. PPF has participated for the last two years and partially funded the efforts of Bon Secours Foundation, Communities Organized to Improve Life, Neighborhood Design Center, Community Law Center, Civic Works, and City Planning to help develop an overall strategy for vacant lot management for OROSW to get a handle on the 350 vacant lots in this twelve neighborhood area. This strategy plan has now been developed and submitted to DHCD by OROSW. This strategy includes a vacant land maintenance crew funded through Civic Works with assistance from PPF's Community Forestry Program to improve vacant lots along the major corridors and within neighborhoods. PPF and NDC held a public forum on Vacant Land Management on December 14, 2000, to discuss the OROSW approach and the issue of vacant lots generally. A Power Point presentation was jointly developed for this forum.

We also worked with Bon Secours, Community Law Center, Neighborhood Design Center, Civic Works, and specific neighborhood community organizations to assist with the restoration plans for 4 vacant lots that function as gateways into Carrollton Ridge, Franklin Square, New Southwest and Boyd Booth neighborhoods funded by the Baltimore Community Foundation. This project was undertaken in conjunction with a city gateway project at the terminus of Wilkens Avenue. VLRP staff was also able to plant 60 trees provided by the Division of Forestry, Department of Recreation and Parks, as part of a US Forest Service grant supported by Revitalizing Baltimore to increase tree canopy in the city. The majority of the trees were planted on vacant lots in Boyd Booth, Druid Heights, Sandtown/Winchester, and Franklin Square neighborhoods.

The OROSW strategy plan is similar to an effort PPF undertaken in 1999-2000 on the east side with Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition in developing a Community Environmental Strategy. Also on the east side, 14 large trees were also planted at Perkins Homes in partnership with HABC to enhance a playground restoration project and as well as along a riparian buffer in Herring Run watershed.

Originally the VLRP worked with DHCD's nine Neighborhood Service Centers for project proposal review sessions, community meetings, and trainings. As a result of DHCD reorganization and the replacement of these centers with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods, we have offered training to the Mayor's Neighborhood Liaisons. Five trainings sessions have been held during this agreement period targeted to VLRP neighborhoods, public agencies and other non-profit organizations, as well as the general public. These workshops focused on creating project proposals, planning, implementing, and maintaining open space greening projects, identifying available city services, and recruiting volunteers. A total of 175 community residents have attended the training sessions, as well as staff from the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods and several other non-profit organizations. An additional training this year included a series of three classes on vacant lot restoration, held at Bon Secours for the OROSW communities. These sessions guided participants through the process of planning, installing and maintaining a greening project for the gateway projects.

PPF helped lead efforts in Baltimore City and County to form urban land trusts to resolve ownership and liability issues related to vacant lot restoration projects. PPF is on the Board of Charm City Land Trusts focused on Baltimore City, although this entity has not yet achieved recognition or involvement of city agency officials. We helped organize and participated in a community forum on vacant lots and land trusts held on September 28, 2001, sponsored by the Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative, and a follow-up meeting organized by Parks & People Foundation on November 2, 2001, with community residents, community development corporations, and city agency staff, sponsored by the Maryland Fund for the Environment of the Baltimore Community Foundation. PPF also worked with a Baltimore County Open Space Advisory Committee that has resulted in adoption of the Chicago NeighborSpace land trust model by the Baltimore County Executive and Council.

Existing relationships were strengthened with Civic Works, Neighborhood Design Center, Community Law Center, and Forestry Division of Baltimore City Recreation and Parks. VLRP also developed partnerships with the Maryland Office of Employment Development, Mayor Office of Neighborhoods, the Baltimore City Police Department, the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Department of Public Works, and Baltimore Gas and Electric to address community issues such as job training and employment, neighborhood safety, economic development, forestry, and illegal dumping.

The VLRP Advisory Committee has continued to meet in two representative groups, one focused on community greening strategies and the other focused on community gardening support. The community greening strategies have been a focus of the Revitalizing Baltimore project, with seventeen public and community organizations involved in this partnership. The OROSW strategy and outreach to community development corporations has been strengthened through RB. The Baltimore Urban Greening Alliance is a group that includes 15 community organizations, neighborhood associations and gardening groups in the city. This group is addressing some of the project problems faced by VLRP and other greening groups such as water access, site conditions after housing demolition, street tree pit cutting, and securing property owner permission. Both RB and BUGA groups have met with many city officials including the Mayor, the Mayor's Office of Economic and Neighborhood Development and Office of Neighborhoods, and the Department of Public Works, Recreation and Parks, and Housing and Community Development.

Site visits were undertaken on a weekly basis. PPF senior staff organized and participated in three site field reviews to assess program progress. Maintenance of the sites was monitored and communication with neighborhood stewards has been ongoing. With each VLRP staff visit, sites were evaluated in order to determine what had been accomplished and what work still needed to be completed. Concurrently, VLRP staff use site visits to evaluate what treatments are successful and what practices do or do not work, so as to determine methods that are the most effective for each site. VLRP staff also assessed each lot in order to determine what factors have hindered the success of each lot, i.e. difficulty accessing water and maintaining plantings. Community stewards have been provided with the necessary training to maintain their lots. A maintenance plan and guidance document has been prepared for each completed vacant lot in consultation with community stewards. Maintenance responsibilities are assumed by the sponsoring community organization when it has been mutually determined that the installation plan has been

completed and the community has received sufficient training to assume the maintenance responsibilities as determined by the VLRP coordinator. These lots were designed so that community leaders and their community could easily maintain the installed designs.

Safety concerns were discussed with the Baltimore City Police Department top officials and procedures were established to ensure community volunteers are fully protected. The procedures established have been used and the Police Department is fully cooperative and supportive. Another key problem for project sustainability is access to water. This is an ongoing problem for many community groups. The BUGA group has met several times with the Department of Public Works about the possibility of establishing a dedicated source of funds for water usage on community managed open green spaces. VLRP formally applied for access to water usage via nearby fire hydrants at 5 active vacant lot greening sites, but was denied by the Department of Public Works. VLRP recommends not watering turf areas during times of drought, but letting the grass go dormant. However, newly planted trees and shrubs need water to establish their root systems. This has been accomplished using several different water conservation strategies.

The Neighborhood Open Space Manual is in the editing stages with a proposed publishing date of September 2003. The final product will include project fact sheets based on the VLRP and other programs. Guidance for specific types of sites are prepared with a maintenance plan developed with community volunteers. The manual is an extensive resource guide for community groups conducting open space greening projects. It includes suggestions on appropriate designs and provides plant lists for the metropolitan Baltimore area. Information included in this manual is based on field experiences through PPF's Community Forestry programs and covers the maintenance aspect quite thoroughly. At the request of community organizers who had encountered vandalism at restored lots, an informational packet was created to help facilitate environmental awareness among youth in the area.

VLRP encouraged community volunteers to participate in the PPF's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Greening Celebration held at the Baltimore Streetcar Museum on October 3, 2001. More than 75 people attended the celebration that included food, music, and free trolley rides, and more importantly, opportunity for community groups to display their successful greening projects for other to acknowledge, recognize and learn about. The celebration was outside the museum with large tree stumps as tables and garden center gift certificates donated by the Joseph Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds were awarded to guests for their work in furthering the greening of Baltimore City neighborhoods. Over 600 volunteers donated at least 2200 hours of work on community greening projects this last year.

**Appendix B**  
**Annual Budgets for DHCD Agreements**

First Agreement (#24505 April 22, 1998)

Program Support                    \$38,280

Project Support                    \$21,000

Organizational Support            \$ 6,800

Total                                \$66,120

**Appendix B**  
**Annual Budgets for DHCD Agreements**

Second Agreement (#26542 March 8, 2000)

Program Support	\$58,016
Project Support	\$35,812
Organizational Support	\$ 11,199
Total	\$110,000

**Appendix B**  
**Annual Budgets for DHCD Agreements**

Third Agreement (#26838 February 16, 2001 to September 15, 2002)

Program Support                    \$131,304

Project Support                    \$ 44,150

Organizational Support            \$ 28,065

Total                                \$203,519

## **Appendix C**

### **Case Study: A VLRP Success Story at Greenmount/Barclay – A “Healthy” Neighborhood**

The several neighborhood that compose Greenmount have been designed part of the Health Neighborhood Initiative of the Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative. Currently, one third of the houses are occupied, one third abandoned and one third vacant lots. Since 1998, the Parks & People Foundation’s (PPF) Vacant Lot Restoration Program (VLRP) has been working on community managed open space projects in 35 communities projects scattered throughout Baltimore City. Recently, the PPF has worked with several nonprofits to devise a more integrated and comprehensive strategy in Franklin Square as part of Operation ReachOut SouthWest. PPF is also working directly with the Druid Heights Community Development Corporation, Reservoir Hill Improvement Association, and the Greenmount Community Planning Council. Summarized below are recent accomplishments working in Greenmount/Barclay neighborhoods. PPF is working to further develop these relationships into a comprehensive greening and open space strategy and action plan to support community and economic development.

#### **Community Greening through Vacant Lot Restoration**

Since 1998, Parks & People Foundation’s Community Forestry Program (CF), lead by VLRP staff, have been active in this community, assisting community volunteers with greening projects. Previously, in the early 1990’s, college student interns from Yale’s School of Forestry were actively worked with community groups on greening projects through PPF’s Urban Resources Initiative. The VLRP provided assistance for greening projects in 30 neighborhoods, one of which was Barclay, one of several neighborhoods that compose Greenmount. CF worked with Barclay Leadership Council (BLC) to restore an inner-block vacant lot on Camp Street into a multi-use community garden.

Starting in 1999, the VLRP staff worked with other PPF Community Forestry staff as part of Revitalizing Baltimore project, partnered with the BLC, Greater Homewood Community Corporation, Jones Falls Watershed Association, and Barclay Townhouse Association, to restore a vacant lot at Guilford and 20<sup>th</sup> Streets as a sitting area featuring native plant species and a mural. This spring, with People’s Homesteading Group (PHC) and Greenmount Community Planning Council, the VLRP staff assisted the community volunteers with cleaning up the garden and working with neighborhood youth to plant flowers on this site. In addition, VLRP staff arranged for two youth to fulfill their community service requirements, stemming from their participation in graffiti vandalism, by repainting the mural located on this site.

Also starting in 1999, at the initiative of the 21<sup>st</sup> Street Block Club, PPF awarded three Community Grants in each of three years for the purpose of street-scaping with planters and to transform a vacant lot at 2001 Guilford Avenue into a flower garden.

In 2000, to assist the BLC, PPF provided a Community Grant to transform a vacant lot at 2120-2124 Barclay Street into Barclay Gardens. Partnering with Civic Works, a wooden fence and a community notice board were constructed with community assistance. This is an opportunity to

work with local youth to develop an entrepreneurial garden in the future. Master Gardener volunteers will act as mentors to the budding entrepreneurs.

In 2002, as an experiment to determine community readiness and to restore strategically located sites based on the PHG's neighborhood "Anchors of Hope Plan," additional technical and restoration assistance was provided this spring on three vacant lots at Barclay and 22<sup>nd</sup> Streets, as open green spaces, based on requests for assistance by community volunteers and in collaboration with the recently formed Greenmount Community Planning Council. (See "The Daily Record" article attachment).

In the spring of 2002, PPF helped PHG initiate a partnership with Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and Civic Works to address one of the city's busiest bus stops at a vacant lot on the northwest corner of Greenmount and North Avenues. This unsightly vacant lot lacks any bus patron amenities. The MTA's Civic Works crew and PPF are working together to install landscape improvements near two future bus shelters. It is expected that these temporary 'green' improvements to the vacant lot will lead to a more permanent redevelopment of the site for commercial use, particularly tailored for the significant pedestrian and bus traffic in the area.

### **Neighborhood Green Infrastructure Survey and Strategy**

In 2002, as part of PPF's Urban Resources Initiative, two local college interns worked in Greenmount/Barclay on a survey of street trees, gardens, parks, and open green spaces. The results of the survey were presented last month to project organizers and next month will be shared with the community at large at a public forum. The data collected will be used to develop a greening strategy with Greenmount and PHG. The survey found 188 empty tree pits, only 15% of the 335 existing street trees are in "good" health, and only 23% of the 266 vacant lots are currently under community care. We are working with forestry professionals to address the health of the existing street trees. An evaluation of treatment options versus removal will be included in this assessment.

We are developing plans to engage the community in planting the 188 empty tree pits with a target of 60 the first year and 128 the following year. This will include targeting 20 street trees this fall as part of the along Barclay Street to fill the empty tree pits on this street as part of a Mayoral initiative to "Paint the Town Green", which is one of the greenest streets and where the vacant lots restoration activities have been focused. This strategy supports PHG plan to restore 8 houses at the intersection of Barclay and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. We will help the community prioritize the 226 vacant lots for restoration with a goal of improving 15-20 vacant lots per year.

Citywide, this year, PPF, in partnership with the Baltimore City Department of Recreation & Parks, will help plant over 500 trees provided to Baltimore City by the US Forest Service via the Department of Natural Resources and PPF's Revitalizing Baltimore project. CF staff has organized a spring planting of 60 trees on vacant lots with the communities of Boyd Booth, Druid Heights, Sandtown/ Winchester, and Franklin Square. This fall, we are committed to overseeing the planting of 300 trees as part of this urban reforestation project. This will be a

focus of a Mayoral initiative to “Paint the Town Green” involving a dozen community groups and corporate sponsorship through Baltimore Gas & Electric.

### **Community Capacity Building**

The green infrastructure survey also identified the need for Greenmount Community Planning Council to have useful community inventory data collected by several agencies and nonprofits in an integrated geographic information system that can be shared with the community and the various organizations working in the neighborhood as a means of improving cooperation, better facilitating working relationships and decision-making, and better utilizing available resources. PPF has committed to assisting PHC in establishing this system. We are helping PHG and GCPC establish a coordinated system of communication among community residents, property owners, schools, churches and businesses. We will assist in the development of a user friendly application of Geographic Information System (GIS) for community mapping that is integrated with the Mayor’s Office of Information Technology and supports the Greenmount Community Planning Council and other organizations to make decision based on the best information. We will help train neighborhood adults and youth and AmeriCorps volunteers in organizing techniques around greening projects.

### **Environmental Education to Green Careers**

With People’s Homesteading Group, an Urban Soil Workshop was held this April on one of the vacant lots. PPF’s Community Forestry staff arranged for research scientists from the US Forest Service to teach residents the basics of soil analysis in relation to greening projects. This month, CF staff introduced a group of 13 Barclay youth, ages 6-15, to the Gwynns Falls Trail. The 10 boys and 4 girls hiked about a 1.5 miles of the 4.5 mile trail loop, the children learned the history of the land, how the trail was developed, and stopped to view plant, insect, and bird habitats along the way. The children’s parents reported back to PHG, that they loved the experience and are interested in going back, perhaps to visit the Carrie Murray Nature Center. We will also develop a “Green Ladder” connection for Greenmount/Barclay youth seeking education and employment in the environmental field. We will also improve our own knowledge and increase our own capacity to assist other neighborhoods in a more comprehensive approach to community building through greening.

## Appendix D

### Case Study: Comprehensive Community Forestry Success Story at Franklin Square

#### **COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY FORESTRY CAPTURES ENERGY, WATER -**

Frank Rodgers certainly knows how to capture the resources that are present in Baltimore. As Community Forester for the Parks and People Foundation, Frank has been the primary contact for a USDA Forest Service Inner City Grant that was awarded in 2001. The project encompasses three elements (park and open space trees, street trees and Franklin Square Elementary Schoolyard re-greening) and was the focus of a recent tour. Anne Cumming, Peggy Harwood and Wilhelmina Bratton of USDA Forest Service were accompanied by Frank, Amanda Cunningham and Guy Hager of Parks & People Foundation to view the successes and future plans for these projects.

#### **Resources harnessed.**

*Nursery*, n. *A place in which something is produced, fostered or developed.*

A tree nursery requires almost as much care and tending as nurseries for young children. With limited staff and budgets, the Parks and People Foundation needed to find a way to maintain their investment in the future and a source of labor to care for young trees. St. Peter's Adult Day Care Program Manager, Chip Wood, partnered with Frank to provide 6-10 job trainees who weed, water, prune and plant trees in the nursery once a week for four hours. The dedication, caring and energy these special-needs adults have provided to the nursery have insured its establishment and success.

When faced with a soggy, muddy quagmire welcoming visitors to the tree nursery, the Community Forestry Staff solved two problems with one...cistern! Rain runoff from nearby buildings and roads was making the entrance the to the tree nursery nearly impossible to navigate during wet weather. In addition, drought was taking its toll on the small trees in the grow-out station. With a bit of drainpipe, two donated storage tanks and some ingenuity, the Community Forestry Staff constructed a cistern system that channels rain runoff under the nursery access driveway to two 1000-gallon storage tanks. Just a quarter-inch (1/4") of rain fills both tanks! Now the driveway stays dry and there is a ready supply of water on site for tree seedlings.

#### **Success Stats**

##### **Park and Open Space Trees**

**34** New Trees in Franklin Square Park  
**80** Trees Out-planted to Carroll Park  
**15** Open Space Trees Planted  
**5** Civic Works Crews Trained  
**800** Volunteer Labor Hours Contributed  
**\$5,000** Forest Remediation Funds Contributed by MD DNR

##### **Street Trees**

**31** Trees Planted  
**21** New Tree Pits Created  
**133** Tree Stewards Recruited  
New Permit Process with City  
**3** High School Interns Recruited for 3 mos.  
**600** Volunteer Labor Hours Contributed  
GIS Data Agreement with City  
**\$5,000** Forest Remediation Funds Contributed by MD DNR

##### **Schoolyard Habitat**

**100** Shrubs Planted  
**6** Trees Planted  
**\$10,210** Construction Funds Donated by Chesapeake Bay Trust  
**180** Volunteer Hours from Students

With a source of tree secured, the Community Forestry staff has been able to make significant progress with park and street trees in southwestern Baltimore. Tree Action teams were formed with Parks and People staff leading neighborhood youths to inventory and plant park and street trees. 160 trees (from the nursery and augmented with purchased trees) have been installed since 2001 in parks and open spaces as well as along streets. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service has provided \$10,000 cash for these projects.



*Franklin Square Elementary School*

The Franklin Square Elementary School re-greening project is moving ahead. Plans to remove over a half acre (more than 1/2 a city block) of asphalt have been slowed only by the arduous process of locating the underground utilities from old city maps. Groundbreaking is hoped to occur this fall. An inclusive design process with the Franklin Square students was completed last winter (see *Urban Projects Newsletter*, January 2002). The momentum from this effort has secured another grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to use part of the schoolyard as an out-grow station for grasses and woody plant material to be used for restoration of Chesapeake Bay tidal wetlands.

## **Appendix E**

### **Summary of the Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore And Six Other Cities (Spring 2000) by Parks & People Foundation**

Baltimore needs a comprehensive strategy for revitalizing neighborhoods that suffer from population loss, vacant housing, inadequate maintenance of vacant land and small parks. The Parks & People Foundation recently prepared a report, **Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore and Six Other Cities**.

The purpose of this report is to strengthen Baltimore's efforts to transform its 14,000 vacant lots into valuable green spaces in an effort to help neighborhoods revitalize themselves. Featured in the report are four Baltimore City vacant lot restoration case studies and research on greening strategies of six U.S. cities - Atlanta, Detroit, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Also, included in the report are recommendations for improving community greening in Baltimore by overcoming current barriers to increased community stewardship of open space.

Twice a year, the Foundation provides community grants and technical assistance to help neighborhood groups undertake community greening projects and has piloted a Vacant Lot Restoration Project with the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development to help communities restore large vacant lots. Also, the Foundation founded and manages a large partnership called Revitalizing Baltimore, which is a model community forestry and watershed restoration project. The Parks & People Foundation has been working since 1984 to create a healthy, safe, and beautiful environment for Baltimore's neighborhoods.

Information about this report and the program mentioned above can be received from the **Parks & People Foundation**, 1901 Eagle Drive, Baltimore, Maryland 21207, telephone 410-448-5663 or on the Internet at <http://www.parksandpeople.org>.

### **A Summary: Transforming Vacant Lots to Green Space**

Baltimore City, Maryland, covers approximately 80 square miles with an estimated population of 665,000 people in 1999, representing a major decline from the nearly 950,000 residents in the late 1950's. This decline in city population is the result of massive flight to the suburbs surrounding Baltimore. As a consequence, Baltimore City has had significant housing vacancies estimated at 12,000 units in 1999. As vacant houses fall into disrepair, they are often demolished, thereby becoming one of the city's vacant lots, already estimated at 14,000.

Well-maintained open space can provide Baltimore and other cities with a valuable opportunity for neighborhood revitalization. Yet, an effective management strategy cannot be implemented unless city officials change the approach to managing vacant lots and neighborhood redevelopment. Until the late 1950s, open space was a valuable public commodity, used to stimulate redevelopment of neighborhoods by creating new parks. Since then, Baltimore and other cities have been experiencing a major exodus of people, and open space management has slipped as a priority of local government.

Baltimore City struggles to manage its 6,000 acres of formally designated parkland. Vacant lots, pocket parks, and other small open spaces are difficult for the City to maintain. These open spaces are often trash strewn, overgrown eyesores, and nests for drugs. This neglect is a symbol of a neighborhood's decline. Fortunately, many community groups in Baltimore and other cities are committed to transforming vacant lots in their neighborhoods to attractive green spaces. For example, in Baltimore as of 1999, there were estimated to be about 200 vacant lots that community groups had adopted officially as "Adopt-a-Lot" properties and many more that have been adopted unofficially.

### **Neighborhood Open Space Management Project**

As the Parks & People Foundation helped community groups transform vacant lots into green space, we recognized that a study of public policies and strategies for improving the management of vacant lots was also greatly needed. We sought and received a grant from the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC), which allowed us to undertake a research project to examine how vacant lots were managed in Baltimore and six similar cities. The study project provided an opportunity to change the way vacant lots are viewed, used, and cared for in Baltimore City. It stimulated the creation of a Vacant Lot Demonstration Project funded by the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development, which has allowed us to apply some of the lessons learned to actual community-managed open space projects. This report summarizes the research effort, the study findings, and recommendations for next steps. Figure 1 provides a summary of management options for neighborhood open space.

### **Barriers to Better Management of Vacant Lots**

Historically, Baltimore City's policy has been to avoid assuming title to abandoned or tax delinquent properties in the hope of encouraging re-use by private owners. However, as a matter of public necessity, the City has been required to assume responsibility for maintaining these properties. This responsibility is distributed among nearly 30 City agencies, with the largest number of holdings in Public Works, Housing and Community Development, and Recreation and Parks. Two agencies (DPW and HCD) now have responsible for trash collection and mowing of vacant lots. Baltimore City HCD is working to develop a comprehensive strategy to address demolition of abandoned housing, and it is our expectation that this study will provide a foundation for development of a coordinated management plan and strategy for improved maintenance of existing vacant lots.

There are several factors currently impeding effective management of vacant lots and small open spaces in Baltimore. They include:

- Tracking and monitoring of vacant lots and small neighborhood open space is difficult due to the lack of a central database of City-held properties accessible by City agencies and citizens.
- Responsibility for maintaining specific vacant lots is determined through an ad hoc process, rather than a rational, collaborative process involving agencies and citizens. Responsibility for specific properties is thereby unclear to both agencies and citizens.
- A lack of property maintenance standards and proactive schedule among any of the responsible agencies leads maintenance work to be driven by resident complaints. Agencies

often become aware of new property assignments once these complaints about unmanaged properties are made.

- The City attempts to ensure private property-owner responsibility for maintenance of housing and vacant lots through the placement of maintenance and utility liens. This system has not worked effectively and often contributes to the problems of abandonment and the difficulty of redevelopment.
- There are several barriers to the transfer of property for private or public community use including:
  - reluctance of City officials to approve lien releases or abatements;
  - no proactive disposal programs of property for reasonable community use including side yard acquisitions by private owners;
  - difficulty securing liability insurance for community use of City property;
  - temporary nature of City transfer for community use;
  - and generally, the overly bureaucratic approach taken to transfer of property for community or private use.
- The City's single program for transfer of management and maintenance responsibility to community groups, the Adopt-a-Lot Program managed by the Department of Public Works, is not currently a viable means of encouraging community stewardship. The program does not provide sufficient incentives for community groups to formally adopt lots, and leads them to assume informal responsibility.
- There is a lack of formal coordination among City agencies and non-profit organizations able to provide technical assistance and resources to community groups undertaking community greening of vacant lots, and of consistent support for these organizations.

### **Creating Opportunities for Neighborhood-Managed Open Space**

While community management is not an appropriate strategy for every vacant lot, it can be an important component in an overall City strategy for managing vacant lots and neighborhood open spaces. In an effort to respond to the growing number of vacant lots in Baltimore and increased community interest in maintaining these spaces, the Parks & People Foundation established a Vacant Lot Restoration Program in 1998 funded by the City Department of Housing and Community Development. The Vacant Lot Restoration Program has provided training, technical assistance, and site improvement funding for 23 neighborhood-managed open spaces. These vacant lots are typically large, City-owned properties adopted by communities.

While the successes and failures of projects are in many ways unique to the sites themselves, they can also illustrate the challenges commonly experienced by communities everywhere. Adequate maintenance of community parks and gardens has emerged as the major issue facing many sites. Maintenance can improve once the responsible party is clear, whether an individual, family, or community group.

Based on the experience of the Parks & People Foundation, we found the following factors contribute to sustainable neighborhood-managed open space projects:

- A cohesive community.
- A well organized group with access to information, resources, and services, or
- A local person who acts as a catalyst to lead stewardship efforts and who can gain support from several City agencies.

- A community initiated and designed project that benefits the community.
- Appropriate site design in terms of community capacity to undertake maintenance.
- Clear delineation of and security for the space, usually in the form of fencing.
- Age diversity in the group managing and using the vacant lot.
- Adaptability of the space to the interests of users.

## **Providing Technical Assistance for Open Space Management**

Several nonprofit organizations and government-supported initiatives work actively with community groups and Baltimore City agencies to improve the management of neighborhood open spaces, including:

- *Center for Poverty Solutions*
- *Citizens Planning and Housing Association*
- *CivicWorks*
- *Community Law Center*
- *Neighborhood Design Center*
- *Parks & People Foundation*
- *University of Maryland Cooperative Extension*

## **What We Learned From Other Cities**

Extensive research was conducted in six cities with similarities to Baltimore—Atlanta, Detroit, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York—to determine how they manage their neighborhood open space. While no single formula for success was identified, several key factors emerged.

- The presence of a charismatic and tireless leader is important for success.
  - Project initiation must come from community members.
- A coalition of greening groups that help in securing government and citizen support.
- Government cooperation is important in achieving sustainability of projects, specifically the adoption of a citywide open space/vacant lot plan or strategy.
  - Strong partnership among non-profit providers and government agencies working together to implement the open space plan and community greening strategy.
  - Governments or non-profits that organize community volunteers, provide technical assistance and plant materials, and long-term stability in property ownership.

While thoughts of owning green space commonly emerge in response to the threat of new development, it is often hard to secure sites once development pressure begins. Whether former industrial cities such as Baltimore will one day regain previous population losses and should therefore hold vacant property for anticipated future development is not the question. Rather, it is for public officials to recognize the opportunity available now to establish neighborhood open space for community use and enjoyment that can contribute to the quality of life of any neighborhood and allow people a sense of control and involvement in the destiny of their neighborhood.

The removal of uncertainty and signs of decline represented by vacant buildings and lots from weakened neighborhoods can help to revitalize these neighborhoods and create a new sense of hope for those people living in neighborhoods experiencing decline. Greening projects help

stressed communities and attract redevelopment. Long-term leases or outright community ownership of vacant lots can be beneficial in these cases, as funds are more readily available for improving green spaces that have a degree of land security. Further, and of equal importance, a comprehensive system of open spaces - small and large - could restore ecological function to cities, and thereby, improve the quality of life for all residents.

### **Action Steps To Encourage Neighborhood-Managed Open Space**

Despite struggling with a dwindling population and shrinking tax base, Baltimore has often been an innovator and leader among American cities. Large capital projects such as the Inner Harbor and Camden Yards are much envied and have been replicated elsewhere. The City's "dollar house" program in the 1970's transformed and preserved a number of historic neighborhoods fraught with the ills of abandonment and decay. But, to realize a better Baltimore, there is still much to be done.

Policies and procedures of City government must be adapted to current demographic and economic realities. A proactive approach to land use management that makes the connection between the economic, environmental, and social health of Baltimore is *essential* to meeting the challenges posed by a changing urban landscape.

An effective, citywide, open space (vacant land) management strategy is critically needed and should be based on the following principles:

- Natural resources and human communities are integrally linked, and the health and vitality of one affects the other, mandating equitable distribution of open space.
- Active participation by people who live in communities is vital to developing sustainable and equitable projects.
- Information sharing at all levels enhances the efficiency and adaptability of City agencies, organizations and communities.
- Strategies and management plans are not a final solution; they are the starting point.

### **Recommendations**

With these principles in mind, the following specific recommendations are made:

Recommendation 1— Strengthen existing coalitions and partnerships working to support community greening, gardening, and urban forestry activities in Baltimore neighborhoods.

- Ensure the active participation of grass roots organizations, technical assistance providers, land managers, and policy-makers.
- Expand opportunities for public participation.

Recommendation 2—Promote greater public awareness of the benefits of well designed, maintained, and used open space to the quality of life.

- Conduct an information and education campaign.
- Elevate vacant lot and neighborhood open space issues as a public priority.
- Educate key decision-makers on the social, economic, and environmental benefits of safe, attractive open space.

Recommendation 3— Advocate and support development of a comprehensive, integrated open space management plan, specifically tackling the pressing concern and opportunity presented by the large number of vacant lots.

- Establish a vision and standards for open space management in Baltimore.

- Develop an effective, citywide open space management plan must be comprehensive and acknowledge both the occurrence and effect of large and small open spaces on the landscape.

Recommendation 4—Change current Baltimore City policies and procedures to create an efficient and effective program of mixed City and community managed open space and to support further community greening.

- Establish workable policies, procedures, and programs for disposal and reuse of vacant and abandoned properties.
- Improve the City’s maintenance of the City-owned and privately owned vacant lots and small open spaces.
- Actively support community organizations working with neighborhood residents to turn vacant lots into “intentional” open space.

Recommendation 5—Establish a nonprofit Land Trust to work in complementary manner with a City Land Bank to preserve neighborhood open space (vacant lot conversions), provide liability insurance, and secure guidance and monitoring of community managed open space.

### Promising Actions Currently Underway

The Baltimore City Departments of Recreation and Parks, Housing and Community Development, and Public Works have begun to have a positive impact on the urban environment by supporting neighborhood open space initiatives and partnering with organizations like the Parks & People Foundation to realize open space goals.

As a result of Parks & People Foundation’s Neighborhood Open Space Management Project, there has been increased interest among community groups, nonprofit organizations, and City government agencies to improve the management of Baltimore’s vacant lots and other neighborhood open space.

- In October 1999, the Baltimore City Planning Department announced its intention to develop a land use and open space plan and a neighborhood planning program for Baltimore in the near future as part of PlanBaltimore. Citizens have expressed hope that such a plan will result in a comprehensive strategy to address the City’s vacant lot/open space issues.
- An Urban Parks Alliance has formed in Baltimore, which may play an active role in the development of the City’s proposed open space plan and act as an advocate for all types of open space. This Alliance represents a variety of open space stakeholders.
- Several local organizations, including the Parks & People Foundation, Community Law Center, and University of Maryland School of Social Work, have begun discussions about forming a Community Land Trust that would help protect community greening projects. Such a land trust would be a separate organization that works collaboratively with open space policy groups, technical assistance providers, and community groups.
- The City government has been exploring options for creating a Baltimore Land Bank to acquire and dispose of vacant land. The land bank would operate differently than a Community Land Trust, by focusing on packaging vacant land for redevelopment.

All major players involved in improving the management and maintenance of Baltimore’s many neighborhood open spaces are working to bring increased funding to this aspect of neighborhood revitalization. City officials have highlighted the need for additional funding of community greening efforts in the City’s comprehensive PlanBaltimore.

### *Acknowledgements*

This report was prepared by the Parks & People Foundation. Formed in 1984, the Parks & People Foundation is Baltimore's leading nonprofit organization for providing creative solutions to recreation and parks issues. In close partnership with communities, other nonprofit organizations, businesses, and all levels of government, Parks & People is an innovator and advocate for environmental education and experiential learning; recreation programs; park development, restoration and maintenance; and urban resources management. The Parks & People Foundation has three program divisions: Great Parks & Stream Valleys, Green Communities, and Motivating Youth Programs.

This report was researched, written, and compiled by a team of people including Katherine McManus, Karen Steer, William Schockner, Katherine Cooper, Kristen Humphrey, and Sally Loomis. In addition, Marilyn Norris and Chris Steele helped to turn the individual research reports into a single document. Guy Hager and Mary Roby helped to focus the report's recommendations. In addition, the Parks & People Foundation created a Neighborhood Open Space Advisory Committee to help organize a public forum and development report recommendations. Special thanks goes to the following committee members: Claudia Staniszewski, Mark Cameron, Zach Holl, Jim French, Peter Conrad, Beth Strommen, and Jackie Carrera.

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## Appendix F

### **Recommendations from the Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore And Six Other Cities (Spring 2000) by Parks & People Foundation**

The following recommendations were created by reviewing research findings, discussing issues at a public forum, and discussions with City officials and advisory committee members. Along with the recommendations, a series of action steps have been proposed that will require collaboration among community, government, and nonprofit organizations.

#### **Recommendation 1— Strengthen existing coalitions and partnerships working to support community greening, gardening, and urban forestry activities in Baltimore neighborhoods.**

A. Ensure the active participation of grass roots organizations, technical assistance providers, land managers, policy-makers, and other types of organizations found by this report to be essential for sustaining healthy community managed open space partnerships.

##### Action Steps

- Build on PlanBaltimore’s formal recognition of the Parks and People Foundation’s Community Greening, Urban Forestry, Vacant Lot Restoration, Community Gardening, and Revitalizing Baltimore programs to advocate and support City development and implementation of improved open space and community greening plans, policies, and programs.
- Pursue opportunities to further strengthen and enhance existing community greening and parks and open space partnerships in collaboration with community organizations and government agencies to provide leadership and assistance in implementing the report’s recommendations.

B. Create further opportunities for public participation through forums, dialog, community organizing, and advocacy to support and encourage implementation of the report’s recommendations.

##### Action Steps

- Organize a series of community forums to further explore opportunities for community action.
- Develop educational materials, including an open space management manual being prepared by Parks & People, to help community groups to undertake successful projects.
- Expand public recognition of volunteers active in improving neighborhood open space.

#### **Recommendation 2—Promote greater public awareness of the benefits of well designed, maintained, and used open space in Baltimore.**

A. Conduct an information and education campaign to improve public understanding of vacant lot issues and potential for turning vacant lots into useful open space.

### Action Steps

- *Develop a process and materials for increasing media coverage of vacant lot/open space issues.*
- *Conduct a series of well-publicized demonstration projects to stimulate stewardship and community action.*
- Create a Neighborhood Education and Volunteer Recruitment Initiative to effectively promote open space programs, ideas, resources and benefits.

**B.** Elevate critical vacant lot and neighborhood open space issues on the public agenda.

### Action Steps

- Coordinate with various advocacy groups, including the Parks & People, Neighborhood Design Center, Citizens Planning and Housing Association, and the Baltimore Alliance for Great Urban Parks.
- Encourage political candidates to make open space issues a priority.
- Ensure the City's Neighborhood Planning Program incorporates open space issues as an element in neighborhood plans.

**C.** Promote the social, economic, and environmental benefits of safe, attractive open space and the role it plays in comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment.

### Action Steps

- Engage developers and potential funders on the issue of the City's vacant lot problem and the need to create and manage neighborhood open spaces.
- Work with the development community (e.g., Baltimore Development Corporation) to assist in demonstrating, documenting, and marketing the economic value that can be captured by neighborhood open space.

**Recommendation 3— Advocate and support development of a comprehensive, integrated open space plan, policies and programs as an element of PlanBaltimore, which can provide guidance for the Neighborhood Planning Program. While a new Open Space Plan would address a wide-range of issues, it should specifically tackle the pressing concern and opportunity presented by the large number of vacant lots in many Baltimore neighborhoods.**

**A.** Establish a vision and standards for open space management in Baltimore. Fully utilize existing networks, coalitions, and partnerships of involved constituencies to participate in developing effective open space policies and programs.

### Action Steps

- Convene an initial meeting of interested groups to determine the scope of the plan and the role and structure of community participation.
- Review information on effective models from other cities, particularly the Chicago CitySpace Plan.

**B.** An effective, citywide, open space management plan must be comprehensive and acknowledge both the occurrence and effect of large and small open spaces on the landscape. The strategy should be based on the following guiding principles:

Action Steps

- Natural resources and human communities are integrally linked, and the health and vitality of one affects the other.
- Active participation by people who live in communities is vital to developing sustainable and equitable open space projects.
- Information sharing at all levels enhances the efficiency and efficacy of City agencies, organizations and communities.
- Strategies and management plans are not a final solution; they are the starting point.
- Monitoring and evaluation are important steps toward continuous improvement.

**Recommendation 4—Change current Baltimore City policies and procedures to create an efficient and effective program of mixed City and community managed open space and to further support community greening.**

**A.** Establish workable policies, procedures, and programs for disposal and reuse of vacant and abandoned properties.

Action Steps

- Create a central inventory of City-owned vacant lots and other properties available for disposal for private or community use, which the public can access through library computer systems.
- Prepare user-friendly informational brochures for a proactive City’s vacant lot acquisition program.
- Establish a City interagency Vacant Lot Review Committee to recommend future and interim uses for vacant lots, provide oversight for agency maintenance assignments and performance, prepare community property use agreements (leases, conservation easements, etc.), make property disposition recommendations, and prepare an annual report on conditions and progress.
- Revise property and tax laws to encourage productive private and community uses for vacant lots.
- Eliminate the “red tape” and monetary penalty for reclaiming City-owned vacant lots, particularly for community uses.
- Improve efficacy of the City’s lien release process and adopt a process for forgiving or releasing back taxes, maintenance, and water bills, perhaps in exchange for property improvements.
- Streamline the City’s Neighborhood Incentive Program to encourage increased use of this funding source for community greening projects.
- Overhaul the City’s Adopt-A-Lot Program to correct deficiencies and provide sufficient resources to ensure its viability and support by community groups.

- Accelerate public acquisition of particularly troublesome derelict properties for priority transfer to responsible private or community groups for reuse and maintenance.
- Conduct neighborhood-based auctions of surplus public property and accelerate the disposition of vacant lots through a vigorous sideyard sale program, having no effect on property assessments if the sideyard is incorporated into an existing developed lot.
- Explore innovative solutions to maintaining privately-owned vacant land beyond current policies as they are not workable. Alternative solutions might include cooperation with State authorities to assess financial penalties against owners using some method other than assessment against the property or City assumption of maintenance responsibilities short of transfer of the property.

**B. Improve the City’s maintenance of the City-owned and privately-owned vacant lots and small open spaces.**

Action Steps

- Improve the quality and accessibility of data on vacant lots with information on City agency assigned for maintenance.
- Post signs on vacant lots indicating who is responsible for maintenance and a telephone number to report problems.
- Department of Public Works should establish a dedicated Vacant Lot Hotline and rapid intervention unit to deal with vacant lot maintenance problems to implement the City’s current policy of responding within 24-hours of receiving a complaint.
- Increase police surveillance of notorious vacant lots used as dumping sites and drug nests.
- City Planning Department should develop urban design guidelines to communicate principles for restructuring distressed neighborhoods with large numbers of vacant lots that can be used as part of the Neighborhood Planning Program.
- Department of Public Works should establish property maintenance standards for City-owned vacant lots and make these standards available to community groups to assist with their monitoring efforts.
- Rebuild and strengthen the City’s Department of Recreation and Parks to help citizens maintain small open space and parks.

**C. Actively support community organizations working with neighborhood residents to turn vacant lots into “intentional” open space by supporting community acquisition efforts, community greening and gardening programs, and low-maintenance uses of vacant lots.**

Action Steps

- Provide additional funding and support for groups community management of open spaces through CDBG funds and other public and private sources.
- Explore opportunities to create a State funded Urban Green Space Program related to the Maryland Smart Growth Policies and Program Open Space, similar to Wisconsin State’s Stewardship Program.
- Pass City legislation to implement a program of support for community greening and gardening and to provide for legal protection and rights for community-owned open space. This legislation should recognize the benefits of community greening to include

community building, food production, open space maintenance, recreation, education, and job development.

- Explore contracting with community groups to interested in assuming maintenance responsibilities or bid out the work to other private entities.
- Implement and promote a long-term lease or “lot-steading” program for City-owned properties.
- Coordinate management responsibilities for vacant lots among interested and capable non-profit organizations.
- Work through the Board of Education to encourage making community open space projects part of the school curriculum and after-school projects meriting community service learning credits.
- Encourage community groups to act as the City’s eyes and ears by monitoring the conditions of and activity around, vacant lots.
- Provide ongoing support for neighborhood clean-ups of vacant lots by establishing a tool bank for gardening and greening at Neighborhood Service Centers, arranging for pick-up of trash collected, and providing water to the vacant lot.
- Explore opportunities to conduct small-area property surveys that can be quickly mapped on the City’s Geographic Information System as a planning and management tool for public agencies and community groups.

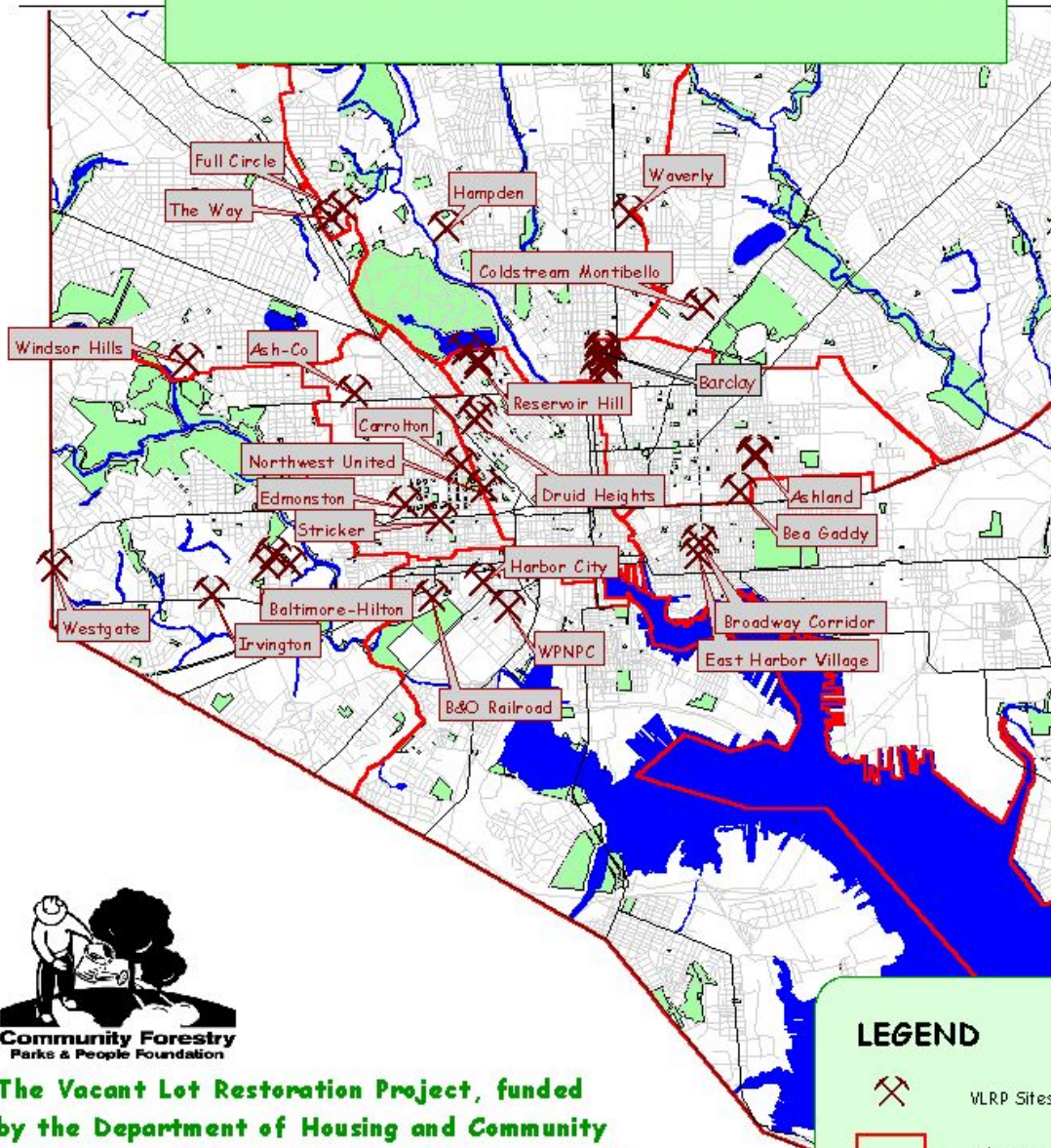
**Recommendation 5—Establish as a priority a means for preserve neighborhood open space, provide liability insurance, and secure guidance and monitoring of community managed open space.**

#### Action Steps

- Establish a Community Land Trust to provide land tenure security to greening investments and to work collaboratively with government and no-profits involved in providing policy guidance, technical assistance, and community organizing.
- Identify and secure long-term funding to establish and sustain the land trust.
- Establish a stewardship fund for maintenance and capital improvements to land trust properties.
- Provide liability insurance against personnel injury for community groups providing property maintenance through group policies with favorable rates.
- Provide through the Land Trust a mechanism for monitoring maintenance standards and performance and making any corrections as necessary.

**Appendix G**  
**VLRP Project Site Reports and Investment Status Chart, Site Contacts, Community**  
**Demographics and Property Ownership**

# VACANT LOT RESTORATION PROJECT



The Vacant Lot Restoration Project, funded by the Department of Housing and Community Development, helps community volunteer groups with neighborhood beautification projects.



## LEGEND

-  VLRP Sites
-  Police Districts
-  Mayor's Gateways
-  Streets
-  Parks

Vacant Lot Restoration Program  
Investment Status 7/1/2002

SITE #	SITE NAME	Location	Plant Materials trees	shrubs	ground cover & flowers	Tech Projects Walkways	Raised beds/ retaining walls	Soil Gravel & Mulch	Bio retentive systems	Fencing & gates	Mural	Hours Invested P&P	P&P Vols	Community vols	Contractors
1	Ash-co	2411 W. North Ave.	5	x	100	x	480'	30 tons	x	270'	x	120	100	100	
2	Ashland	2310-26 E. Eager St.	4	x	200	x	150'	50 tons	x	130'	yes	160	40	50	sidewalk repair
2b		Eager & Montford	2	x	20	x	x	x	x	x	x	30	x	30	brick grill
3	B & O	500 S. Vincent St.	10	10	100	x	x	30 tons	catchment system 2000 gallons		yes	500	200	100	irrigation  system
4	Bea Gaddy	2117 Jefferson St.	5	5	10	x	100'	1 ton	x	x	x	40	10	20	
5	Broadway	1640 E. Pratt St.	5	10	20	x	100'	x	x	x	yes	50	30	10	
6	Camp St.	339 Camp St.	10	10	20	x	100'	5 tons	x	360'	x	50	40	100	
6b		331-337 Camp St	x	x	x	x	x	10 tons	x	x	x	40	10	20	
6c		337 East 22nd St.	2	4	10	x	80'	x	Rain Barrels	150'	x	80	x	50	sidewalk repair
6d		336 East 22nd St.	2	4	10	x	80'	x	Rain Barrels	150'	x	80	x	50	
6e		401 East 22nd St.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	90'	x	10	x	100	
6f		1927 Guilford Ave.	7	10	30	x	x	1 ton	x	x	yes	40	50	10	
7	Carroll Imp.	Baltimore & Hilton	9	20	50	90'	40'	40 tons	x	x	x	120	100	200	
7b		Abbingdon & Phelps	1	x	50	x	70'	x	x	x	x	20	x	40	
7c		Baltimore & Mt. Olivet	x	2	20	x	20'	2 tons	x	x	sign	20	x	20	
8	Carrollton	1001-1009 Carrollton Ave.	4	10	40	x	120'	3 tons	x	180'	x	40	x	100	
9	Coldstream	1653 Abotston St..	2	15	20	60'	x	30tons	Rain Garden	x	x	200	78	10	
10	Druid Heights	1836-1842 Druid hill Ave.	11	x	x	x	x	5 tons	x	x	x	40	x	50	
10b		Robert st.	1	8	10	x	150'	2 tons	x	x	x	40	x	50	
11	East Harbor	Gough & Bethel sts	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	20	x	x	
12	Edmonson	522-532 Edmondson	4	x	x	x	x	20 tons	x	50'	x	40	10	10	
13	Full Circle	2500 Shirley Ave.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	20	x	x	BGE tree removal (In-kind)
14	Hampden	Dellwood & Buena Vista	5	5	x	x	x	4 tons	x	x	x	10	10	10	
15	Harbor City	Ramsay & Cross Sts.	1	30	30	x	320'	25 tons	yes	20'	x	120	10	30	
16	Irvington	4004 Frederick Ave.	4	4	10	x	80'	x	x	100'	x	10	10	10	
17	NW United	865-869 Harlem Ave.	4	25	60	150'	x	40 tons	Rain Garden	x	x	80	50	10	
18	Reservoir Hill	Whitlock & Brookfield	5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10	10	40	
18b		Whitlock & Brookfield	x	x	x	x	x	20 tons	x	x	x	30	x	5	
18c		Linden Druid Park Lake	x	10	40	x	x	x	x	x	x	10	x	10	
19	Stricker	312-316 Stricker St.	2	x	40	x	192'	15 tons	yes	170'	x	120	10	5	
20	The Way	3900 Cottage Ave.	10	5	40	x	180'	10 tons	x	x	x	40	10	20	
21	Wash- Pigwn	813-815 W. Cross St.	4	x	x	x	x	x	x	140'	x	10	x	50	
22	Waverly	644 Parkwyrth	10	20	20	x	x	x	x	x	x	10	x	100	
23	Westgate	500 Block N. Bend Rd.	20	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	30	x	100	
24	Windsor Hills	2600 Talbot	5	20	100	100'	288'	15 tons	rainbarrels w/ underground irrigation	270'	x	200	50	100	
<b>Totals-</b>			<b>154</b> trees	<b>227</b> shrubs	<b>1050</b> ground cover & flowers	<b>400'</b> Walkways	<b>2530'</b> Raised beds/ retaining walls	<b>358 tons</b> Soil Gravel & Mulch	<b>8</b> Bio retentive systems	<b>2080'</b> Fencing & gates	<b>4</b> Mural	<b>2440</b> P&P	<b>828</b> P&P Vols	<b>1610</b> Community vols	

VLRP Site Contact Information

Site #	Site Name	Lead	Address	Phone	Email
1	Ash-co	Denise Gordon	2742 Baker St. 21216	410-669-2634	
2	Ashland	Janice Jacobs	2403 E. Eager St. 21205	410-522-0276	
3	B & O	Frank Rodgers	800 Wyman Park	410-448-5663	frank.rodgers@parksandpeople.org
4	Bea Gaddy	Glenn Ross	1100 N. Rutland Ave.21205	410-327-7047	
5	Broadway	Nico Ramos	11620 Reisterstown Rd. 21236	410-526-7186	garani@msn.com
6	Camp St.	Berkeley Neblett	410 E. North Ave. 21202	410-889-0071	berkeley@phghouse.org
7	Carroll Imp.	Rebecca Caldwell	35. N. Abbingdon Ave. 21229	410-945-8342	
8	Carrollton	Joan Osbourne	1018 Carrollton Rd. 21217	410-728-3186	
9	Coldstream	Mark Washington	3220-A The Alameda 21218	410-235-6715	
10	Druid Heights	Richard Henderson	1821 McCulla St. 21217	410-523-1350	Richarddhcdc@aol.com
11	East Harbor	Travis Street	250 S. Broadway 21231	410-534-6522	
12	Edmonson	John Haily	1900 Edmondson Ave. 21223	410-518-6348	
13	Full Circle	Jessie Crosier	2446 Shirley Ave. 21215	410-466-0990	
14	Hampden	William Miller	3501 N. Charles St. 21218	410-261-3503	
15	Harbor City	Kim Smith	1 N. Carey St. 21223	410-328-4104	ksmith@psych.umaryland.edu
16	Irvington	Lane Victorson	4107 Fredrick Rd. 21229	410-644-1904	
17	NW United	Wanda Best		410-728-5519	wjbest@starpower.net
18	Reservoir Hill	Georgia Winders	2001 Park Ave. 21217	410-669-0291	
19	Stricker	Janet Flemmings	305 N. Stricker St. 21223	410-328-1406	
20	The Way	Susan Newton	3806 roland View Ave. 21215	410-669-7433	
21	Wash-Pigtwn	Gary Letteron	904 Washington Blvd. 21230	410-385-0496	
22	Waverly	Dianne Wheaton	638 Parkwyth Ave 21218	410-366-8533	
23	Westgate	Patrick Burns	P.O. Box 25331 21229	410-461-1515	
24	Windsor Hills	Marion Sharif	2612 Talbott Rd. 21216	410-367-3024	

### VLRP Site Demographics

Site #	Site Name	1990 Pop.	Poverty Rate %	White %	Black %	Census #
1	Ash-co	3349	19	0	99	1503
2	Ashland	2996	41	6	93	703
3	B & O	3438	56	67	31	1903
4	Bea Gaddy	2608	34	35	58	603
5	Broadway	1660	47	40	58	301
6	Camp St.	3030	33	7	93	1204
7	Carroll Imp.	3270	20	43	56	2006
8	Carrolton	4638	47	0.5	98	1601
9	Coldstream	4811	19	0.5	99	907
10	Druid Heights	4409	38	2	98	1403
11	East Harbor	1660	47	40	58	301
12	Edmondson	2000	58	0	99	
13	Full Circle	6605	30	1	99	1513
14	Hampden	2368	15	97	0	1308
15	Harbor City	1745	56	5	95	1802
16	Irvington	4176	26	7	92	2804
17	NW United	4733	56	0	99	1703
18	Reservoir Hill	4115	41	9	91	1301
19	Stricker	2734	30	84	15	1902
20	The Way	1512	32	0.6	99	1512
21	Wash-Pigtwn	2624	58	58	41	2101
22	Waverly	5058	12	21	77	901
23	Westgate	5645	7	52	46	2804
24	Windsor Hills	2673	15	5	93	2803

VLRP Property Statistics

		Site Name	Street #	Street Name	Block #	Lot #	Dimensions	City Owned	Privately Owned
1	1	Ash-co			2307	53	46x84	M	
2	1b				2307	53a	18x84	M	
3	1c				2307	54	42x84	M	
4	2	Ashland	2310	E.Eager	1590	25	12x90		P
5	2b		2312	E.Eager	1590	26	12x90	H	
6	2c		2314	E.Eager	1590	27	12x90		P
7	2d		2316	E.Eager	1590	28	12x90		P
8	2e		2318	E.Eager	1590	29	12x90		P
9	2f		2320	E.Eager	1590	30	12x90		P
10	2g		2322	E.Eager	1590	31	12x90		P
11	2h		2324	E.Eager	1590	32	12x90		P
12	2i		2326	E.Eager	1590	33	12x90		P
13	2j		2321	E.Eager	1590	45	13x65	H	
14	2k		2323	E.Eager	1590	44	12x65		P
15	2l		2325	E.Eager	1590	43	12x65		P
16	2m		2327	E.Eager	1590	42	12x65	M	
17	2n		2329	E.Eager	1590	41	17x65	M	
18	3	B & O							P
19	4	Bea Gaddy	2117	Jefferson	1669	22	25x75		P
20	4b		2119	Jefferson	1669	23			P
21	5	Broadway	1626	E.Pratt	1395	2	13x72	M	
22	5b		1628	E.Pratt	1395	3	13x72	M	
23	5c		1630	E.Pratt	1395	4	13x72	M	
24	5d		1632	E.Pratt	1395	5	13x72	M	
25	5e		1634	E.Pratt	1395	6	15x72	M	
26	5f		1636	E.Pratt	1395	7	12x72	M	
27	5g		1638	E.Pratt	1395	8	12x72	M	
28	5h		1640	E.Pratt	1395	9	14x72	M	
29	6	Camp St.	339	Camp	3823	69	85x47	M	
30	6b		341	Camp	3823	68	13x60	M	
31	6c		343	Camp	3823	67	13x59		P
32	6d		345	Camp	3823	66	13x58		P
33	6e		347	Camp	3823	65	13x57		P
34	6f		349	Camp	3823	64	13x55	M	
35	6g		2202	Barclay	3816	66	14x80		P
36	6h		346	E. 22nd St.	3816	1	15x80		P
37	6i		344	E. 22nd St.	3816	2	15x80		P
38	6j		342	E. 22nd St.	3816	3	15x80	H	
39	6k		340	E. 22nd St.	3816	4	15x80		P
40	6l		338	E. 22nd St.	3816	5	15x80	H	
41	6m		336	E. 22nd St.	3816	6	15x80		P
42	6n		339	E. 22nd St.	3813	27	85x15		P
43	6o		341	E. 22nd St.	3813	28	85x15		P
44	6p		343	E. 22nd St.	3813	29	85x15		P
45	6q		345	E. 22nd St.	3813	30	85x15		P
46	6r		347	E. 22nd St.	3813	31	85x15		P
47	6s		2120	Barclay	3813	34	15x80		P
48	6t		2122	Barclay	3813	33	15x80		P
49	6u		2124	Barclay	3813	32	15x80		P

\*M = Mayor City Council

\*H = Housing Authority

\*P = Private

VLRP Property Statistics

		Site Name	Street #	Street Name	Block #	Lot #	Dimensions	City Owned	Privately Owned
50	6v		401	E. 22nd St.	3814	12	85x18		P
51	6w		403	E. 22nd St.	3814	13	85x15	M	
52	7	Carroll Imp.	1	S.Hilton	2230(l)	1	16x184		P
53	7b		3	S.Hilton	2230(l)	2	16x184		P
54	7c		5	S.Hilton	2230(l)	3	16x184		P
55	7d		7	S.Hilton	2230(l)	4	16x184		P
56	7e			Abington	2230	45	68x73		P
57	7f			Abington	2230	46			P
58	7g			Abington	2230	47			P
59	7h			Mt. Ovilet	2230			M	
60	8	Carrollton	1003	N.Carrollton	66	20	13x50	M	
61	8b		1005	N.Carrollton	66	21	13x50		P
62	8c		1007	N.Carrollton	66	22	13x50		P
63	8d		1009	N.Carrollton	66	23	13x50	M	
64	9	Coldstream	1653	Abbotston	4130	18a	33x90		P
65	9a		1647	Abbotston	4130	19	13x90		P
66	10	Druid Heights	1900	Druid Hill	321	1	16x88		P
67	10b		1902	Druid Hill	321	2	16x88		P
68	10c		1904	Druid Hill	321	3	16x88		P
69	10d		1842	Druid Hill	328	22	15x70		P
70	10e		1840	Druid Hill	328	21	15x70		P
71	10f		1838	Druid Hill	328	20	15x70		P
72	10g		1836	Druid Hill	328	19	15x70		P
73	10h		503	Robert St.	328	23	14x70		P
74	10i		505	Robert St.	328	24	14x70		P
75	10j		507	Robert St.	328	25	14x70		P
76	11	East Harbor	1621	Gough	1428	47	15x90		P
77	11b		1623	Gough	1428	46	14x90		P
78	11c		1625	Gough	1428	45	14x90		P
79	11d		1627	Gough	1428	44	14x90		P
80	11e		1629	Gough	1428	43	14x90		P
81	11f		1631	Gough	1428	42	14x90	M	
82	12	Edmondson	1829	Edmondson	120	37	16x100	M	
83	12b		1831	Edmondson	120	38	16x100		P
84	12c		1833	Edmondson	120	39	16x100		P
85	12e		1835	Edmondson	120	40	16x100		P
86	12f		522	N. Monroe	119	6	13x78		P
87	12g		524	N. Monroe	119	7	13x78	H	
88	12h		526	N. Monroe	119	8	13x78		P
89	12i		528	N. Monroe	119	9	13x78		P
90	12j		530	N. Monroe	119	10	13x78		P
91	12k		532	N. Monroe	119	11	13x78	H	
92	13	Full Circle			3347	6	400x15		P
93	14	Hampden					75x400	M	
94	15	Harbor City	1218	W.Baltimore	199	33	16x43		P
95	15b		1220	W.Baltimore	199	34	17x43	M	
96	15c						40x30		P
97	16	Irvington	4004	Frederick	2539	29	29x68		P

\*M = Mayor City Council

\*H = Housing Authority

\*P = Private

VLRP Property Statistics

		Site Name	Street #	Street Name	Block #	Lot #	Dimensions	City Owned	Privately Owned
98	17	NW United	861	Harlem	452	45	28x76		P
99	17b		865	Harlem	452	47	14x76		P
100	17c		867	Harlem	452	48	14x76		P
101	17d		869	Harlem	452	49	14x76		P
102	17e		871	Harlem	452	50	28x78		P
103	18	Reservoir Hill	940	Whitelock	3463	16	15x91	M	
104	18b		938	Whitelock	3463	16a	19x91	M	
105	18c		936	Whitelock	3463	16b	19x91	M	
106	18d		934	Whitelock	3463	16c	19x91	M	
107	18e		932	Whitelock	3463	16d	19x91	M	
108	18f		930	Whitelock	3463	16e	30x91	M	
109	18g			Brookfield		36	119x147		P
110	18h			Brookfield		37	24x142		P
111	19	Stricker	312	N.Stricker	151	36	18x77	M	
112	19b		314	N.Stricker	151	37	18x77	M	
113	19c		316	N.Stricker	151	38	18x77	M	
114	20	The Way	3905	Cottage Ave.	3342	68	64x143	M	
115	20b		3907		3342	67	18x143	M	
116	20c		3909		3342	66	18x143	M	
117	20d		3911		3342	65	18x143	M	
118	20e		3913		3342	64	20x143	M	
119	21	Wash-Pigtwn	813	W.Cross	811	7	12x75		P
120	21b		815	W.Cross	811	8	12x75		P
121	21c		817	W.Cross	811	9	12x75		P
122	21d		819	W.Cross	811	11	20x75	M	
123	22	Waverly	644	Parkwyrth	3976	37	70x100		P
124	23	Westgate	501	N.Bend	8038	1	.267A		P
125	23b		503	N.Bend	8038	2	.268A		P
126	23c		515	N.Bend	8038	3	.574A	M	
127	24	Windsor Hills	2600-2602 Talbot Rd.		8468	1	214x70		P

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**Appendix H**  
**VLRP Brochure and Sample Application Form**

**Appendix I**  
**VLRP Proposed Vacant Lot Restoration Stewardship Acknowledgement Sign**

This property has been adopted by

as part of the Vacant Lot Restoration Program funded by the Baltimore Department Housing and Community Development with implementation by the Parks & People Foundation. Additional assistance was provided by Baltimore City Departments of Public Works and Recreation and Parks. Please contact Parks & People at 410-448-5663 for further information on this program.



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