

An aerial photograph of Baltimore, Maryland, showing a mix of historic brick buildings and modern skyscrapers. In the foreground, a US Coast Guard cutter is docked at a pier. A large, stylized graphic of a sun or circle in shades of yellow and orange is overlaid on the right side of the image. The text 'downtown RISE' is positioned in the upper left, and 'A Strategic Action Plan' is in the lower left.

downtown  
**RISE**

**A  
Strategic  
Action  
Plan**

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## A letter from Mayor Brandon M. Scott

When I initially announced the concept of Downtown RISE last fall, it was meant to be a framework to guide downtown Baltimore's next chapter and chart a course to making downtown even more dynamic, inclusive, and prosperous than it is now. Already, our downtown is Baltimore's fastest growing residential neighborhood, and for our city to grow into its full potential, we must build on that progress. Since that announcement, members of my team have worked closely with Downtown Partnership of Baltimore and a number of our stakeholders to engage community members from across the city to shape and build a vision for the future of downtown. The result of that work is this complete strategic action plan: Downtown RISE.

We never do this work in a vacuum. Baltimore is a city of neighborhoods and in order for our downtown to be strong, our neighborhoods must be strong too. Every day my administration works to make our neighborhoods safer, healthier, and more vibrant. Numerous investments and developments are underway all across the city, from Uplands to Park Heights to Yard56 near Greektown and many, many more. In December, we also put forward our vision for the largest investment in Baltimore's neighborhoods in our history - a 15-year plan to comprehensively address the vacant housing crisis once and for all.

Now, we're putting forward our expanded vision for the future of downtown. Both are equally important. We know that what happens downtown impacts our neighborhoods, and what happens in our neighborhoods impacts downtown. We are all interconnected.

And we're heading in the right direction. Baltimore has made incredible progress over the past three (3) years. In 2023, Baltimore experienced its largest single-year reduction in homicides in our city's history, dropping more than 20%. This year, as of April 23rd, homicides are down an additional 32% on top of last year's reduction and non-fatal shootings are down an additional 20%. Total violent crime is down 8% year-over-year. My administration continues to make public safety issues a top priority. And while we have made progress, we must continue to double down on our public safety efforts in our neighborhoods and in our downtown core.

We know that downtown is our city's job hub, our primary tourism destination, and our economic engine. That is why undertaking the actions outlined in Downtown RISE now is so important. The heart of our city cannot wait. We must think about how we seize the opportunity in front of us to reimagine Baltimore's Downtown by building on the investments already coming in, aggressively pursuing new businesses, growing downtown's residential population, improving the cleanliness, safety, and infrastructure in downtown, bringing arts, placemaking and entertainment for all to enjoy, and implementing strategies to make downtown more pedestrian friendly.

Over the last 6 months, my Administration has been planning and drafting this action plan, and even begun implementing aspects of Downtown RISE. We have also been collaborating with a Downtown Stakeholder group, made up of both city and State officials, nonprofit and private stakeholders, on a master planning process for the future of our downtown. That process is comprehensive and is actively underway; it includes studying the street grid, connecting downtown assets, understanding traffic patterns, and making our downtown more livable and vibrant. While that work continues, the Downtown RISE Strategic Action Plan will serve as a bridge to the implementation of the broader ten-year vision we're working on in partnership with all of those stakeholders.

The investments discussed in this report represent a significant focus on our downtown corridor, but the benefits of making our downtown more dynamic, inclusive, and prosperous are meant to serve every Baltimorean. Especially when combined with the investments and improvements we're making in every corner of the city - together, these efforts will help build Baltimore's renaissance and ensure we're able to achieve our full potential. This is just a start.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brandon M. Scott".

**Brandon M. Scott**  
Mayor of Baltimore



## A letter from **Shelonda Stokes**

Our job at Downtown Partnership is to make you fall in love with Downtown. It's in our name. Whether you choose to live, work, play or invest here, we want you to believe in our diversity, get energized by our vibrancy, and authentically feel proud of the City and State's economic engine. Two years ago, we engaged the Urban Land Institute to help us map a blueprint for Downtown. They validated much of what we know about our Downtown and provided four key take-aways for us:

1. Activate the public realm and enhance streetscape infrastructure.
2. Increase ground-floor activity and maximize use of all vacant properties.
3. Address crime to encourage investment.
4. Develop a Downtown strategic framework.

Downtown RISE is the outgrowth of this work which has been happening for years. Development projects are infusing the city with new vitality and activity, revitalizing the urban core. After a \$250 million renovation, CFG Bank Arena became one of the world's top ten grossing arenas of its size—in just its first few months after reopening. The renaissance is happening now. And we also know we need to work together to connect these investments, to build our infrastructure, and to clean and beautify downtown to help downtown RISE for the years and decades to come.

Over the past three years, Downtown Partnership has been entrusted with more than \$34 million in State grant funding for capital improvement projects which will be visible improvements to the Downtown landscape. Much of this work is part of the Downtown RISE Strategic Action Plan. Some of the most exciting initiatives include activating park spaces, expanding storefronts through Operation Storefront and the BOOST program, increasing safety and collaboration by standing up a Strategic Operations Center, and continuing the great work of the Squeegee Collaborative.

As we look ahead, DPOB's commitment to Downtown RISE is unparalleled. Our teams are out right now helping to implement immediate solutions for cleanliness, placemaking, entertainment, and community development. In the years ahead, we will feel the momentum of RISE and the success of collaborating to help more and more people know what we already know: that Baltimore and Baltimore's downtown are on the RISE.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shelonda Stokes".

**Shelonda Stokes**  
President, Downtown Partnership of Baltimore

# Executive Summary

To maximize the impact of the incredible excitement for and investment in downtown, Mayor Brandon M. Scott directed his administration to develop and implement a strategic plan to invest in the downtown of the future: the downtown that Baltimoreans deserve. What follows in this plan outlines the actions that the Scott Administration is prioritizing and undertaking, as well as many that it's considering, to capitalize on this moment for Baltimore.

The strategies outlined are broken into four strategic focus areas:



## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Promoting business growth and investment



## **INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Investing in the long-term success of downtown



## **ARTS, CULTURE, & ENTERTAINMENT**

Creating a unique and vibrant destination



## **PUBLIC SAFETY & CLEANLINESS**

Ensuring a safe and welcoming downtown

**These strategies, discussed in depth below, serve as the now-to-medium-term priorities for downtown investment. In the coming weeks, Downtown RISE will publish a further report on long-term priorities.**

# WE ARE MOVERS



**WE ARE  
DOWNTOWN**



# Why **Downtown**

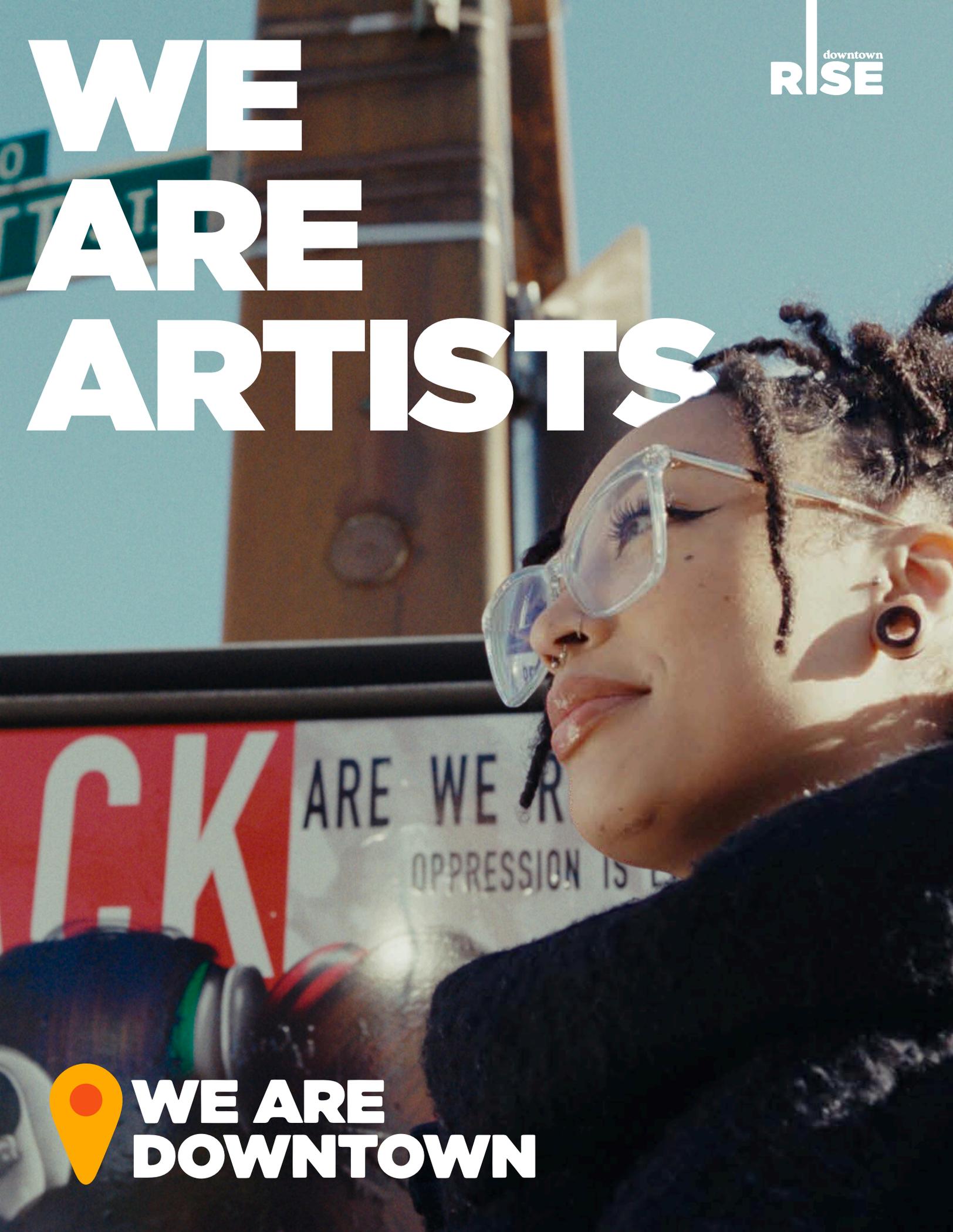
Downtown is on the RISE. With more than \$6.9 billion of investment in development downtown between 2018 and 2028, the recent announcement of Baltimore as one of the 31 inaugural Tech Hubs, which will allow Baltimore City to unlock up to \$75M in federal investment, and the throngs of visitors coming to downtown to cheer on the Orioles and the Ravens sports teams, attend concerts, and shop small businesses – the renaissance of downtown Baltimore is happening now!

In 2023, the Mayor's Office started to develop a strategic action plan with the goal of rising to the needs of Downtown Baltimore, today. In partnership with Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, with input from key stakeholders and community members from across the city, the vision of the plan was born. What follows is the immediate-term action plan for Downtown RISE. This is a guiding framework that will evolve as Baltimore evolves. In the coming weeks, Downtown RISE will release an additional blueprint for long-term priorities. In the coming months, a companion Implementation Framework will be published, outlining responsibilities, metrics, funding, and key action steps.

## **The Vision**

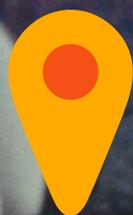
Through stakeholder and community engagement across the city, The mayor's office, alongside key stewards of Baltimore City's downtown core, identified the areas in which our city requires a strategic focus, investment, caretaking, collaboration, and innovation to rise to the opportunity for Baltimore's downtown core. There is catalytic investment at various stages and of various types across downtown, Downtown RISE must serve as the connective tissue and create the ecosystem for our downtown and our city to thrive.

Through RISE, the Scott Administration and its partners at DPOB will leverage the downtown core's many assets; harmonize and coordinate with other strategic and transformational initiatives; and steer the city's revitalization through enhancement of our built environment, promoting and supporting business downtown, elevating our art, entertainment and cultural experiences, and raising the level of our quality of life within our city's core. This plan is just a start. Mayor Scott and his administration will continue to engage stakeholders to develop a 10-Year Vision for downtown, to be published in the near future.



# WE ARE ARTISTS

downtown  
**RISE**



**WE ARE  
DOWNTOWN**

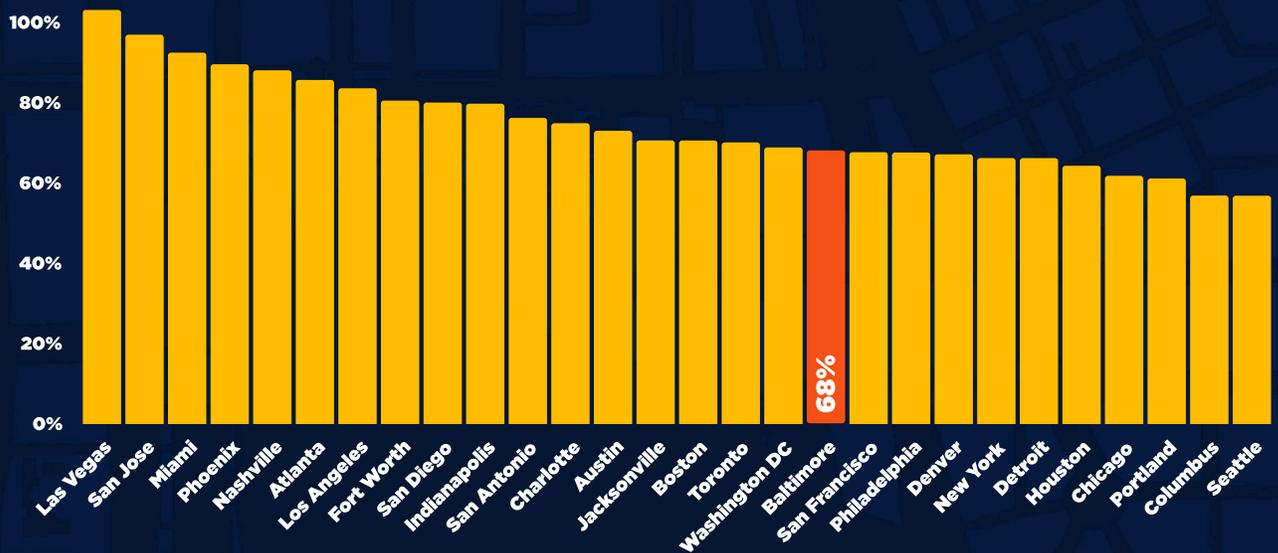
# The Importance of Downtowns

Downtowns are vital to the success of a city, from neighborhoods to businesses to parks, arts, and culture. Downtowns serve as hubs of economic activity, resources, cultural vibrancy, accessibility, innovation, urban revitalization, and regional branding and identity.

Across the country, downtowns are fighting to recover post-Covid. Virtually every city is struggling with office and retail vacancy, decreased tourism and downtown foot traffic, and the economic realities of a more hybrid workforce. Some downtowns are recovering faster than others.

Baltimore’s downtown is essential to one of the nation’s most prominent metropolitan areas and to the region. Welcoming a diverse array of residents, employees, and visitors, Baltimore’s downtown fosters inclusivity and cultivates robust social fabric. Baltimore’s downtown, enriched by deep history and unique culture, should be a deep source of local pride and identity. And right now, Downtown Baltimore needs strategic investments.

## The Road to Recovery: Pre-Covid Activity



\* Source: Downtown Recovery, School of Cities, University of Toronto, 2023. Recovery is measured by comparing the total number of unique visitors during March to mid-June of 2023 to the same period in 2019 using cell phone data. A number greater than 1 indicates more visitors than pre-Covid, a number less than 1 indicates the ratio of fewer visitors comparatively.

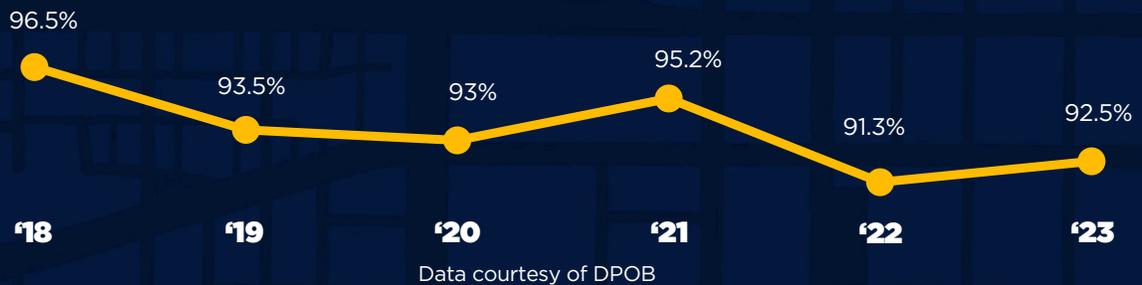


**For the region to be healthy and successful, Baltimore’s Downtown must be healthy and successful. Execution of this Strategic Action Plan serves as a strategic and coordinating tool to address key challenges and to propel downtown Baltimore toward a vibrant, sustainable future.**

# The Importance of Baltimore's Downtown

Downtown Baltimore remains the economic engine for Baltimore City and the region, and pandemic recovery has been strong, though more work is needed. On April 10, 2024, DPOB released its annual State of Downtown Baltimore Report. Much of the data is positive.

## RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY



Growth is strong, considering that between 2017-2022, 4,634 units came online. DPOB predicts continued downtown residential growth, projecting downtown residential unit demand to grow to a potential of 7,025 new rental and for-sale units over the next 5 years.

## VISITORS TO BALTIMORE



**\$3.7b**

**FY23 Visitor Spending**

**\$168m+**

**FY23 Visitor Spending from Conventions \*\***

Data courtesy of Visit Baltimore, from Longwoods International. Data refers to all of Baltimore City.

\*\* Data courtesy of Baltimore Convention Center Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis FY 23, Crossroads Consulting Services

# Though Baltimore's downtown comprises just **3.8%** of geographic area, it's:



**OF CITY'S REAL PROPERTY TAX YIELD\***



**OF CITY'S PARKING TAX YIELD\***



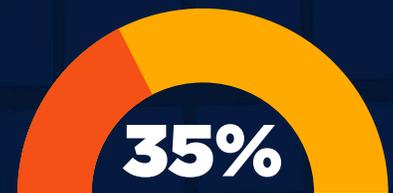
**OF CITY BUSINESS\***



**OF HOTEL ROOMS IN BALTIMORE\***



**OF CITY'S INCOME TAX YIELD\***

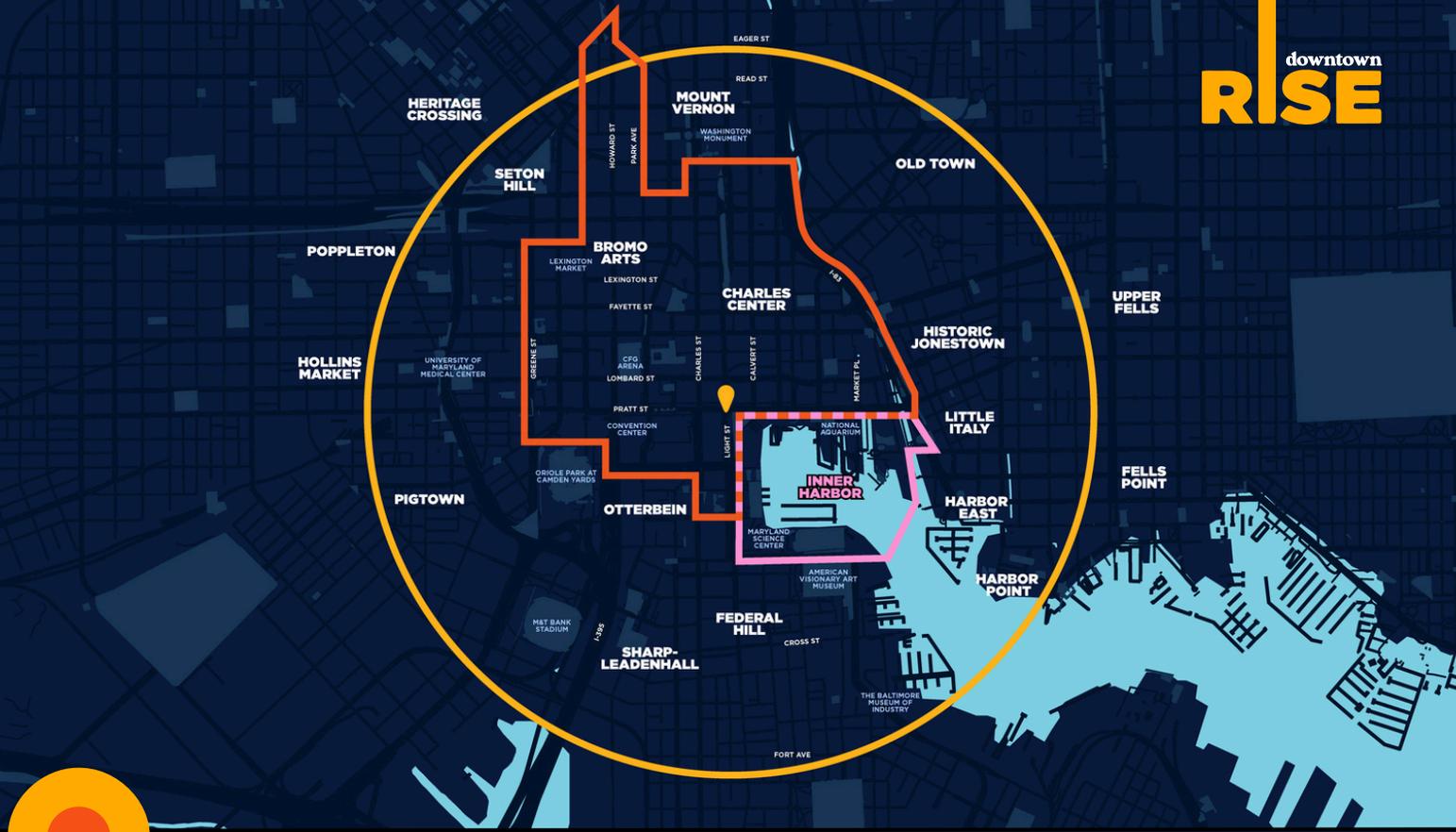


**OF CITY JOBS\*\***

\* Source: DPOB 2021 State of Downtown Report  
\*\* Source: DPOB 2023 State of Downtown Report



**By beautifying downtown, improving the ground level and pedestrian experience, and making it easier to open and operate new businesses, Baltimore should see a continued increase employment downtown, more tourism, enhanced support for small businesses, cultural institutions and the arts, and a boon to the tax base.**



## Area of Analysis

# This plan considers three layers of downtown stakeholders:

### 1 THE DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT AREA (DMA)

The DMA is a 106-block business improvement district in the heart of downtown for which DPOB has responsibility. It encompasses most of the downtown core, the orange line in the map above marks the boundary of the DMA. The neighborhoods within this area are Downtown, Mount Vernon, Charles Center, Bromo Arts District, Inner Harbor, and University of Maryland, Baltimore.

### 2 THE 1 MILE RADIUS FROM THE CORNER OF LIGHT AND PRATT

The yellow line represents the 1-mile radius from the intersection Pratt and Light streets at the heart of downtown, an area that is often used to track economic data related to downtown. The neighborhoods within this area are Downtown, Mount Vernon, Charles Center, Bromo Arts District, Inner Harbor, and University of Maryland, Baltimore, Old Town, Historic Jonestown, Little Italy, Upper Fells, Fells Point, Harbor East, Harbor Point, Otterbein, Federal Hill, Historic Sharp Leadenhall, Ridgely's Delight/Stadiums, Pigstown/Washington Village, and Seton Hill. This area includes most of the DMA in addition to including the Inner Harbor, represented in pink above.

### 3 CITY WIDE

This work cannot be done in a vacuum, and the context of the rest of Baltimore City is considered as well while analyzing the Downtown area to ensure that the downtown also benefits and enhances the entirety of the city. View Live Baltimore's full map of all neighborhoods [here](#).



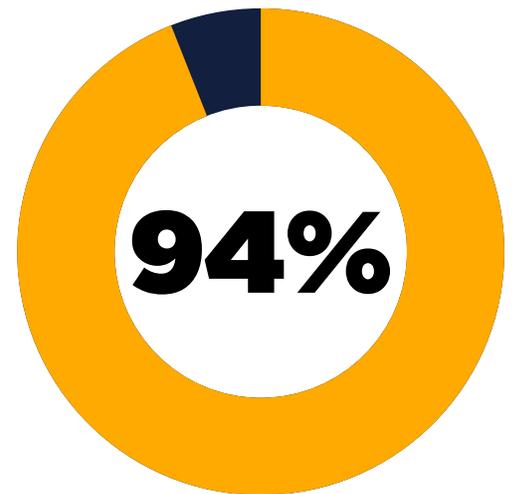
## Downtown's Demographic Context

Downtown Partnership of Baltimore regularly compiles and reports significant downtown data, from demographics to economic health to housing needs and more. The data offers valuable insights into various aspects of the health of the downtown economy, including the residential, commercial, and retail sectors, as well as employment and investment trends.

Residential population statistics reveal a diverse and growing community within the downtown area, reflecting the appeal of urban living. Concurrently, the commercial office market portrays a dynamic landscape, attracting businesses of all sizes seeking a strategic foothold in the heart of the city. Moreover, insights into the residential and retail markets shed light on consumer preferences and market dynamics, essential for fostering vibrant urban environments.

As a center of employment, downtown Baltimore serves as a bustling hub, accommodating a diverse workforce across various industries. Employment data underscores the economic vitality of the area, driven by sectors ranging from finance and technology to healthcare and hospitality. Additionally, investment information underscores confidence in downtown Baltimore's future, with ongoing developments and strategic initiatives driving growth and prosperity.

By leveraging this comprehensive demographic context, stakeholders can gain a deeper understanding of downtown Baltimore's evolving landscape, informing strategic decision-making and fostering initiatives that enrich the urban experience for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.



**of Downtown RISE Survey respondents believed the recovery of Downtown is very important or extremely important for economic well-being in the City of Baltimore.**

A skateboarder in a dark jacket and pants is captured mid-air, performing a trick at a skate park. The skateboarder is holding a pink skateboard with a graphic design. The background shows a blue sky with light clouds and the structure of a skate park with a metal roof and concrete ramps.

# WE ARE FEARLESS



**WE ARE  
DOWNTOWN**

# Plan Development

Downtown Baltimore RISE: A Strategic Action Plan was carefully crafted with several layers of input and engagement. Mayor Scott initially tasked a downtown project team to identify a core set of focus areas and strategic actions to begin this process. The initial draft plan was released in Fall 2023, inclusive of immediate actions and areas for further consideration. In the months that followed, the team engaged with stakeholders of all kinds, including business owners, residents, government officials, non-profit leaders, and other stakeholders across the city.

Through individual meetings, virtual engagement sessions, stakeholder meetings, surveys, and data analysis, the team arrived at the proposed Strategic Action Plan. What follows provides a near-term plan to help drive the RISE of Downtown Baltimore. Additionally, key stakeholders are collaborating on a long-term master plan for the growth of Downtown, ensuring the over \$6.9 billion of investment within the 1-mile radius of Light & Pratt Streets between 2018 and 2028 builds a thriving, growing, and inclusive downtown with rippling effects throughout the City of Baltimore and beyond.

**When asked what would ENCOURAGE people to travel to Downtown more frequently? (Choose up to 3), the top responses were:**



# The Plan

People who reside, work, and recreate in Baltimore's downtown have a vested interest in maintaining a high quality of life. Sustaining this vitality requires deliberate action and intention. This document serves as a strategic roadmap for City Leaders and Stakeholders and for the community to hold them accountable. It is intended to be consulted intentionally to ensure that City Leadership and Stakeholders make progress and commemorate milestones and successes for the city. This plan is just a start. Mayor Scott and his administration will continue to engage stakeholders to develop a 10-Year Vision for downtown, to be published in the near future.

Each action is detailed below with a concise description or methodology for its execution, accompanied by a rationale outlining the justification for the proposed action. Additionally, each item is linked to the thematic goal it contributes to achieving.



**of Downtown RISE survey respondents believed the recovery of Downtown is very important or **extremely important** for quality of life in Baltimore.**

**“LET’S FILL EMPTY BUILDINGS AND STOREFRONTS”**

**-HOWARD PARK RESIDENT**

# Areas of Focus

During the goal setting and planning stages of this strategic action plan, four core focus areas surfaced:



## **RISE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Rise of Economic and Community Development focuses on fostering a thriving business community within Baltimore City's downtown core, revitalizing the downtown area and driving economic growth. Critical components include: streamlining permitting and regulatory processes, removing barriers and incentivizing businesses to operate in the downtown core, and encouraging a "return to office" strategy. Supporting and retaining small businesses and attracting new businesses and amenities to the downtown core enriches the local ecosystem and enhances the area's overall appeal. A thriving business ecosystem attracts investment, creates job opportunities, and generates economic prosperity, ultimately enhancing the livability and vitality of our downtown.



## **RISE OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Rise of Infrastructure Development focuses on the revitalization and enhancement of Baltimore City's downtown core through public infrastructure: sidewalks, roads, park space, public transportation, signage, and advocacy for large capital projects. Recognizing the critical role of the public built environment in urban revitalization, this strategic focus aims to foster a vibrant and sustainable downtown landscape conducive to economic growth, community well-being, and environmental resilience. Moreover, intentional care, maintenance, and investment in the public built environment is paramount to revitalizing the downtown area, enhancing the connectivity and walkability between the waterfront, the stadium district, the Convention Center, and so many assets, activities, attractions, and restaurants



## **RISE OF ARTS, CULTURE, & ENTERTAINMENT**

Rise of Arts, Culture, and Entertainment focuses on nurturing and enhancing the vibrant cultural ecosystem within Baltimore City's downtown core, home of the BROMO Arts District and major cultural assets such as The Hippodrome, Everyman Theater, and CFG Bank Arena. Accessibility of arts, culture, and entertainment is critical for a vibrant downtown. Supporting and promoting physical art, events, and engagement with beloved cultural assets creates dynamic and inclusive spaces where people can come together to celebrate and connect. Arts, Culture, and Entertainment also attracts visitors, which benefits residents, drives business growth, and promotes Baltimore to future residents.



## **RISE OF PUBLIC SAFETY & CLEANLINESS**

Rise of Public Safety and Cleanliness focuses on enhancing the overall livability of and experience in Baltimore City's downtown core, with an emphasis on safety, security, and cleanliness. To steward the successes of downtown, the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (DPOB), city agencies, and other stakeholders will collaborate to build and sustain a safe, clean, and easily accessible downtown area. Safety and security are fundamental pillars of a thriving urban environment. By prioritizing the safety of residents, workers, and visitors, the downtown core becomes a more inviting and desirable place to live, work, and play. Coupled with enhanced cleaning, graffiti removal, power washing, trash pickup, and dumping prevention, downtown will feel more inviting and recreation friendly.

# Implementation

Downtown RISE is an action plan, not just a plan for action. Since launching Downtown RISE in November of 2023, Mayor Scott's administration has worked in partnership with a variety of organizations to improve downtown every day. These priority actions are the result of a months-long process of engaging citywide leaders in government and consultation with the business community, nonprofit sector, and community members. In the coming months, a companion Implementation Matrix will be built to publicly delineate responsibilities, metrics, progress, and any areas in need of further funding.

## Overarching initiatives

This process identified two opportunities for immediate impact that touch every element of this plan and everything that happens downtown.

- 1** Launch Downtown-Stat, a government-wide initiative to rapidly respond to and monitor downtown issues. Led by a designated Mayoral appointee, agency heads and their deputies, in partnership with additional Mayor's Office Leadership and DPOB, this group will triage and address emergent issues as they arise, including, but not limited to: permitting challenges, infrastructure repair, crime reduction, and general coordination. This group will further monitor the success of a comprehensive downtown built environment audit process as outlined in initiative two.
- 2** Build and maintain a comprehensive inventory of downtown repair and replace issues, to systematically assess and address infrastructure needs in downtown Baltimore by conducting an ongoing comprehensive inventory. This begins with a block-by-block assessment of the DMA to identify infrastructure needs, including issues with potholes, sidewalks, curbs, crosswalks, alleys, street striping, lighting fixtures, signage, and trash receptacles.

**“MODERNIZE SIGNAGE, IMPROVE THE VISUAL APPEAL, MORE PLANTERS AND FLOWERS, FACADE IMPROVEMENTS, QUALITY OF LIFE ENFORCEMENT, MORE SHOPPING AND RESTAURANTS.”**

**-VISITOR TO BALTIMORE**



# RISE OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## **1 STREAMLINE PROCESSES AND UPGRADE THE TECHNOLOGY USED IN THE PERMITTING PROCESS TO ENSURE BUSINESSES LOCATING AND ALREADY WITHIN THE DOWNTOWN CAN EXPEDITE RENOVATIONS, BUILDOUTS, ETC.**

Recognizing the significance of efficiency and predictability for businesses contemplating investment decisions, Baltimore City must upgrade technology and augment staff in agencies handling permitting and licensing approvals. The City has already invested nearly \$6 million to overhaul its permit system. Scheduled to be implemented in late 2024, this system upgrade is anticipated to significantly reduce the bureaucratic friction that often hinders business expansion and relocation, marking a pivotal step toward optimizing administrative operations. Through implementation of PermitStat, the City will monitor staffing and operations to ensure permit approval and licensing processes are as straightforward and predictable as possible, review options for third party plan reviews to expedite the review process, and explore establishing a one-stop-shop permitting model.

## **2 ADVOCATE FOR AND IMPLEMENT STATE LEGISLATION TO AMEND LIQUOR LICENSE PROVISIONS TO ALLOW SMALL RESTAURANTS/CAFES TO OBTAIN LIQUOR LICENSES**

To bolster restaurant activity within the DMA, the city, in collaboration with downtown stakeholders, successfully advocated for state bill HB1089 to amend requirements for Class B (BWL) beer, wine, and liquor licenses. This collaboration will continue with implementation of the legislation and attraction of restaurants.

Requirements for a Class B (BWL) license pose significant challenges for hopeful restaurateurs in general. Requirements for downtown restaurants were even higher, including a capital investment of at least \$700,000 and average daily receipts from sale of food that are at least 65% of the daily total, hindering the ability for new restaurants to open downtown and obtain a new license. HB 1089 removed requirements on seating and capital investment, instead requiring restaurants to establish a bona fide kitchen through the Health Department, and expect operators to enter a memorandum of understanding with DPOB. These changes will allow for small restaurants/cafes to open downtown, supporting economic growth and community spaces.

## **3 CONTINUED SUPPORT OF OPERATION STOREFRONT, FOR RETAIL VITALITY & COMBATING VACANCY**

For close to a decade, DPOB has been providing flexible grants to retail businesses that choose to relocate to vacant storefronts in the DMA. Recently, DPOB has secured additional funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants, aimed at increasing both the annual number of supported businesses and the average grant size, now averaging approximately \$20,000 per recipient. To sustain this initiative, and express its continued support of this critical program, the city plans to continue funding through a combination of Facade Improvement Program Grants and other city funding sources. This strategic approach not only revitalizes vacant storefronts but also injects vitality into the downtown core, fostering economic growth, attracting foot traffic, and enhancing the overall vibrancy and appeal of downtown Baltimore for residents and visitors.



## **Community & Economic Development**

### **4 RETURN TO OFFICE STRATEGY**

Recognizing the impact of reduced office occupancy on the economy and vitality of downtown Baltimore post-pandemic, implementation of a comprehensive "Return to Office Strategy" is critical. The shift towards remote or hybrid work models has adversely affected the commercial office space market, businesses reliant on downtown foot traffic, and downtown transportation, energy, and vitality. Thus, a strategic approach is necessary to revitalize downtown and stimulate economic recovery. The city will partner with State government partners and private companies to encourage a comprehensive return to the office strategy to increase the number of employees in the DMA.

### **5 CONTINUED SUPPORT OF BOOST PROGRAM ROUND 3 AND 4**

DPOB is committed to further enhancing the Downtown BOOST Program, an initiative designed to foster the long-term success of BIPOC-owned businesses in the DMA. With the forthcoming implementation of Rounds 3 and 4, this program will continue to provide grant funding and a robust cohort model tailored to the unique needs of BIPOC entrepreneurs. Supporting entrepreneurship in the BIPOC community is critical to fostering equity and inclusivity in downtown business endeavors. By empowering BIPOC-owned businesses through targeted support and resources, such as mentorship, networking opportunities, and financial assistance, the Downtown BOOST Program contributes to leveling the playing field and creating pathways to economic prosperity for historically marginalized communities. This initiative not only enhances diversity and representation but also strengthens the overall economic vitality and resilience of the downtown core by fostering a thriving ecosystem of diverse and inclusive businesses.

**“BRING IN SMALL, LOCAL BUSINESS AND MORE PLACE-BASED CULTURAL EVENTS YEAR-ROUND”**  
**- INNER HARBOR RESIDENT**



## **Community & Economic Development**

### **6 EXPAND ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE**

The high cost of childcare in Baltimore significantly exceeds the financial reach of many families, with center-based care for children aged 2-5 averaging over \$14,500 annually—twice the in-state tuition at Coppin State University. For infants and toddlers, these costs soar even higher. This financial burden is a key factor driving families away from urban living, contributing to the suburban migration trend and the hollowing out of the city center. Furthermore, the lack of affordable childcare options is a major obstacle for workforce participation, especially among women, exacerbating the challenge of economic recovery and growth.

To counteract these trends, the City must review and reform permitting regulations with an eye toward facilitating the establishment and expansion of childcare facilities downtown. This includes identifying underutilized public spaces that could be repurposed into childcare centers, providing critical services to families while revitalizing vacant storefronts. The Mayor's Office of Employment Development should develop a pipeline of qualified childcare professionals through targeted training and certification programs, in partnership with local educational institutions.

By increasing the availability of affordable childcare, we can make our city a more attractive place to live and work, encouraging families to stay and enticing new residents to move in. Moreover, expanding childcare access downtown has the potential to breathe new life into vacant spaces, contributing to the vibrancy and economic vitality of our urban core. By providing affordable childcare downtown, parents will be incentivized to leave the remote workforce and return to the office, reigniting the dynamic, collaborative spirit that has always been a hallmark of Baltimore's business community.

### **7 DOWNTOWN RESTAURANT RECOVERY PROGRAM**

DPOB is initiating a Downtown Restaurant Recovery Program with the objective of growing culinary options and revitalizing vacant restaurant spaces in the DMA. This program seeks to enlist between eight to ten new restaurants, extending financial support of at least \$100,000 to each establishment, to assist both emerging and established restaurateurs. By filling vacant restaurant spaces, the program effectively combats vacancy challenges while enriching downtown's dining and retail environment. Moreover, it endeavors to stimulate commercial engagement, fostering activity beyond the conventional 9am-5pm workday.



## **Community & Economic Development**

### **8 PROMOTION OF RESIDENTIAL DEMAND IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE**

The City of Baltimore and DPOB will embark on a comprehensive marketing and advertising campaign aimed at promoting DPOB's research findings on residential demand in downtown Baltimore. Targeting developers, large institutions, and assets within the DMA, this campaign seeks to raise awareness of the critical need for residential and housing development to meet the city's evolving needs.

### **9 EXPLORATION OF MODIFICATION OF BUILDING CODE PROVISIONS TO FACILITATE OFFICE-TO-RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS**

The City of Baltimore will embark on a thorough exploration and review of potential changes to waive or modify building code provisions to facilitate office-to-residential conversions within the downtown core. This initiative aims to encourage, incentivize, and streamline the process of converting office spaces into residential units, thereby addressing the increasing residential demand in downtown Baltimore.

### **10 CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF HOMELESS SERVICES (MOHS) IN OUTREACH EFFORTS WITHIN DOWNTOWN**

The COVID-19 pandemic widened the gap related to housing and healthcare inequities for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. To address this growing need, cities across the country began acquiring hotels and motels as alternative options for housing amid overcrowded shelters and other spaces. In early 2024, the Mayor's Office announced a deal to acquire two hotel properties as part of the City's response to the nationwide housing crisis and the subsequent rise in homelessness. This latest hotel acquisition is a critical extension of MOHS's effort to provide housing stability, emergency shelter, and supportive services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Baltimore City. While these two properties sit just outside the DMA, they are within the 1-mile radius and will help serve as housing options for unhoused individuals across downtown.



## **Community & Economic Development**

### **11 DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR THE DOWNTOWN GOVERNMENT CENTER**

The City of Baltimore is embarking on a strategic initiative to reimagine its downtown government administrative campus. A task force will be convened to envision the future of these facilities, focusing on optimizing the city's footprint and driving economic development. This effort aims to analyze the potential for consolidating and repurposing existing spaces to reduce portfolio costs while identifying opportunities for value creation. Ultimately, this holistic approach seeks to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and community engagement within Baltimore's governmental infrastructure.

### **12 OFFICE TENANT RETENTION STAKEHOLDER GROUP**

Retaining major office tenants in the DMA is critical to decreasing office vacancy. 80% of economic growth generally comes from existing business. As office tenant preferences have evolved to include larger floor plates, open offices, shared amenities, and a campus-like environment, newer developments beyond the tradition downtown core have attracted several office users previously located in older downtown office structures. Ensuring a vibrant future in downtown means keeping current office users in downtown. BDC has identified approximately 16 office users with expiring leases in the next 4 years with space more than 25,000 square feet. BDC will lead the retention effort by meeting with the businesses to discuss staying in Downtown. BDC will also meet with building owners to discuss improvements required to retain existing office tenants and discuss any potential incentives that may be applicable.

## **Due Dilligence**

### **13 IN ADDITION TO THE IMMEDIATE AND MEDIUM-TERM EFFORTS OUTLINED ABOVE, THE ADMINISTRATION IS UNDERTAKING DUE DILIGENCE AND PLANNING FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Advocate for and implement legislation to establish a "first year free" program, which would waive the cost of initial registration fees, initial license fees, first-year permit, and other applicable fees for qualifying businesses.
2. Explore feasibility of waiving minor privilege fees in the DMA.
3. Tax Incentive Exploration for BIPOC Business Attraction.
4. Grocery Store Attraction.
5. Work with Clerk of the Court to digitize business licensing and permitting process for new businesses.
6. Continue to pursue strategies to combat downtown office vacancy.



# RISE OF ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, & CULTURE

## 1 CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN THE BROMO ARTS DISTRICT

The Bromo Arts District is a key feature within DPOB's DMA. DPOB supports the program and initiatives of the Bromo Arts District which strengthens the creative community and visitor experience within Downtown through the production of collaborative large scale events, promotion of diverse programming and opportunities, resource sharing, and arts advocacy. The arts are essential in the creation and expansion of Downtown. Over 400 events take place in Bromo annually, resulting in more than 275,000 annual visits from individuals experiencing live performances, gallery exhibitions, and open studios. The growth of the creative economy directly impacts local artists and has a sizable secondary impact on adjacent industries.

## 2 OPERATION: PHYSICAL ART, IN DOWNTOWN

The city will launch Operation: Physical Art, a multifaceted initiative prioritizing and implementing physical art installations throughout the downtown core. Physical art plays a crucial role in enhancing the vibrancy, identity, and livability of urban spaces, serving as a catalyst for cultural enrichment, community engagement, tourism, and economic development. By integrating various forms of physical art into the downtown landscape, Baltimore seeks to create memorable and inspiring experiences for residents, workers, and visitors alike.

## 3 IMPLEMENTATION OF LARGE-FORMAT BILLBOARD/SIGNAGE

The digital signs located within the North Harbor ASSC (Area of Special Sign Control) within the DMA enliven streets and neighborhoods. In addition to being a public-facing platform to host local art, community event information, and emergency messaging, these installations offer placemaking and branding opportunities for area businesses. Revenue generated from these billboards allows for further neighborhood investment. This signage can also be leveraged to attract large meetings and conventions to Baltimore, to welcome those visitors, and to market opportunities downtown.



## Arts, Entertainment, & Culture

### **4 EXPLORE AND STREAMLINE PUBLIC PERFORMANCE LICENSING IN SUPPORT OF BUSKING & STREET PERFORMANCE**

As part of its efforts to enhance downtown vibrancy, the city is evaluating public performance licensing to encourage busking and street performances. Recognizing the importance of creative expression and cultural enrichment in urban spaces, this process aims to harness the energy and talent of local artists to create a dynamic and engaging city environment. By permitting busking and street performances, the city seeks to attract visitors to downtown areas, offering unique and spontaneous entertainment experiences. These performances not only add to the city's cultural landscape but also serve as a platform for local artists to showcase their talents and connect with the community. Additionally, busking and street performances have the potential to bolster the local economy by drawing crowds to downtown businesses and restaurants, stimulating spending and supporting the livelihoods of artists.

### **5 SUPPORT DOWNTOWN ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL ASSETS INCLUDING THE HIPPODROME AND EVERYMAN THEATERS**

These venues serve as cultural hubs downtown. After a \$250 million renovation in 2023, CFG Bank Arena became one of the world's top ten grossing arenas of its size—in just its first few months after reopening. These venues draw visitors and locals alike downtown to enjoy cultural experiences and grow the local economy. By supporting these cultural anchor institutions, the city is supporting a downtown that attracts world-class talent and encourages pride in downtown Baltimore.



## **Due Dillgence**

### **6 IN ADDITION TO THE IMMEDIATE AND MEDIUM-TERM EFFORTS OUTLINED ABOVE, THE ADMINISTRATION IS UNDERTAKING DUE DILIGENCE AND PLANNING FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Removal of Permitting Barriers for Physical Art and Placemaking in Arts Districts
2. Encourage Increased Frequency in Street Closings for Pedestrian Friendly Events
3. Assess the creation of an Arts, Entertainment, and Nightlife Director
4. Enact Legislation Encouraging LED Art Components to Building Exteriors
5. Beautify vacant buildings with art
6. Centralize special events in permitting in the Mayor's office
7. Exploration of Parking Strategies Downtown to Increase Vibrancy
8. Explore Normalizing Variable Fees Citywide



# RISE OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

## 1 RASH FIELD PHASE II

Phase I of Rash Field has become a beloved park in Baltimore's Inner Harbor, frequently seeing daily average usage eclipse 1,000 people. In collaboration with the Waterfront Partnership, Phase II of Rash Field will add gardens, a beach area with volleyball courts, lawn and fields, and a new waterfront plaza. The Scott Administration is working to close the \$4 million funding gap for this important project so that construction can begin in 2024.

## 2 LIBERTY DOG PARK RENOVATION, EXPANSION AND ENHANCEMENT

In consideration of the dense downtown population of people and their pets, there is an incredible deficit of parks and open space downtown. DPOB creatively converted a wide median into a dog run, known as Liberty Dog Park, to help address this need by building one of the only dog areas within the downtown core. However, with increases in residents and activation of the popularity of the newly renovated CFG Bank Arena and other surrounding office products, there is an opportunity to renovate, expand and enhance the park not just for dog owners, but for all people. DPOB was granted \$4 million from the State of Maryland to undergo this capital project, and the design process is underway. The prioritization of Liberty Dog Park promotes community well-being, enhances public health, creates a more inclusive environment, improves aesthetics and livability, boosts property values, and connects assets.

## 3 TREE PLANTINGS, TREE WELLS, PLANTERS & LANDSCAPING

DPOB partners in the maintenance of tree wells, plantings, and landscaping throughout downtown, and is working with a landscape architecture firm to design and plan for additional greening throughout the DMA.

## 4 LIGHTING

All lighting downtown will be cataloged and, where appropriate, planned for repair, replacement, and installation of additional fixtures. Proper lighting plays a crucial role in creating a secure urban environment, contributing to the overall perception of safety and enhancing the quality of life for residents, visitors, and workers. Lighting enhancements improve safety and navigability, while supporting an environment for economic development.

## 5 PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE: SIDEWALKS, CROSSWALKS, PEDESTRIAN SIGNALING

The pedestrian experience needs to be a priority for downtown. Pedestrian infrastructure will be cataloged and assessed, and, where appropriate, planned for repair, replacement, and improvement, including sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signaling. Proper pedestrian infrastructure enhances connectivity and vibrancy and is essential for creating a safe, accessible, and enjoyable urban environment for residents, visitors, and workers alike.

## **6 DOWNTOWN WAYFINDING SIGNAGE ENHANCEMENT & MANAGEMENT**

Wayfinding signage plays a critical role in guiding residents, visitors, and workers to their destinations, enhancing navigation, and improving the overall experience of downtown.

## **7 PROACTIVE IDENTIFICATION OF POTHOLES & SERVICE REQUEST RESPONSE**

Maintaining roads in the downtown core is critical to attracting visitors and spurring economic development. As part of the actions outlined in Downtown RISE, the city's Department of Transportation started to proactively identify and fill potholes, repair broken sidewalks, and restripe streets.

## **8 TRANSIT STOP EXTERIOR ENHANCEMENTS**

A portion of capital funding from the Maryland General Assembly will be used by DPOB to make improvements to bus and metro stops in the DMA. DPOB recognizes the importance of beautifying and enhancing the exteriors of transit stops, including subway metros and bus stops, and will partner with MTA and DOT to further these enhancements. Transit stops serve as critical points of entry and first impressions for residents, commuters, and visitors arriving in the city, often shaping their perception of the neighborhood and broader downtown area. By investing in the beautification of transit stops, Baltimore aims to create welcoming and visually appealing environments that reflect the city's character and identity.

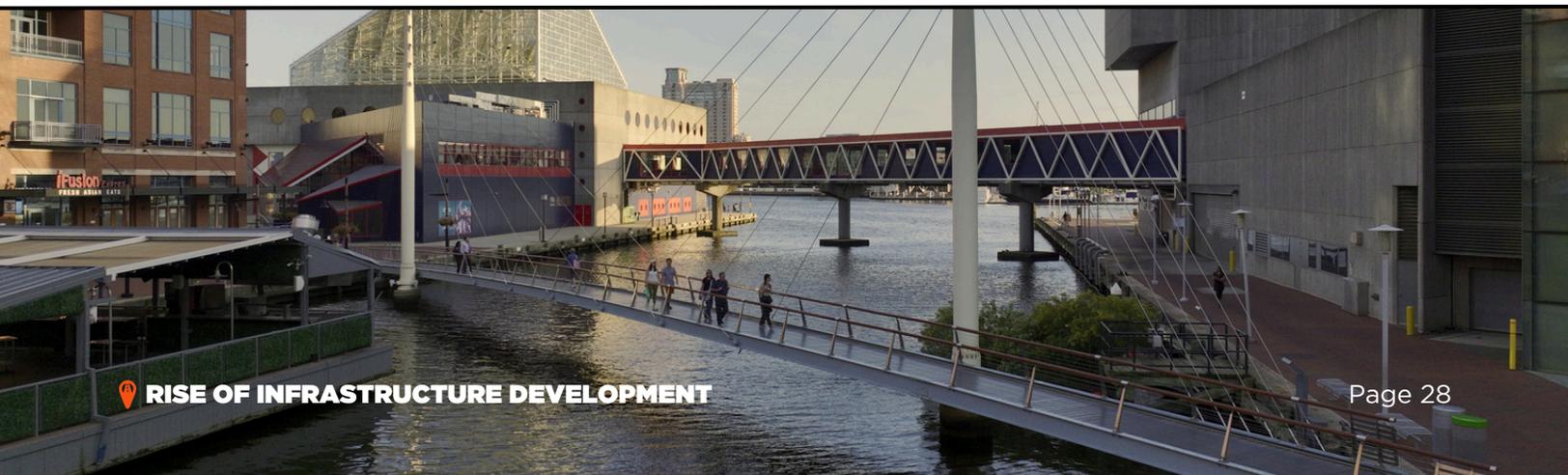
## **9 ADVOCATE FOR CONVENTION CENTER ENHANCEMENT PROJECT FUNDING**

For decades, the Baltimore Convention Center (BCC) has been a cornerstone of the local economy, catalyzing tourism and bringing pride to the city and region. In Fiscal Year 2019 alone, event activity at the BCC was estimated to generate approximately \$507.2 million in total output, supporting 4,380 total jobs and \$203.7 million in total earnings at the state level. Moreover, tax revenues generated from BCC-related activities were estimated to be around \$42.2 million for the same period, with the state benefiting from approximately 70% of these revenues. These figures underscore the BCC's substantial contribution to economic vitality, highlighting the urgency and necessity of securing additional funding for its enhancement.

Recently enacted state legislation (SB 896) establishes a task force to provide advice regarding creation of a new entity or development of a new approach to manage the Baltimore Convention Center as part of a strategic move toward aligning incentives for securing the necessary funding. By advocating for this enhancement project, we not only address the immediate infrastructure and operational needs of the BCC, but also lay the groundwork for a sustainable model of governance and management that can attract further investment. This initiative is about more than just maintaining a facility; it's about reimagining and revitalizing the BCC as a beacon of economic development and cultural vitality downtown. Through strategic investments and aligned incentives, the city can ensure the Convention Center remains a key driver of economic activity, job creation, and vitality in our city, especially in our downtown core.

## **10 LEVERAGE & COLLABORATE IN UMB & UMMS STRATEGIC, REAL ESTATE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING INITIATIVES**

Incorporating the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), and the University of Maryland Medical Systems (UMMS) into the strategic planning for downtown Baltimore's redevelopment is imperative for sustainable growth and innovation. Both institutions play a pivotal role in the City's economic landscape, contributing significantly in the healthcare, education, and research sectors. With Baltimore's recent designation as a Federal Tech Hub focusing on artificial intelligence (AI) and biotechnology—particularly in predictive technologies aimed at enhancing health outcomes—these institutions stand at the threshold of unprecedented growth opportunities.





## Infrastructure Development

### **11 PRODUCE A SUB-AREA PLAN FOR THE DOWNTOWN CORE WITHIN THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN**

Over the last year, the Mayor's Office has been collaborating with a Downtown Stakeholder group that includes government, nonprofit, and private stakeholders, on an infrastructure master planning process for the future of our downtown. That process is comprehensive and is actively underway; it includes studying the street grid, connecting downtown assets, understanding traffic patterns, and making our downtown more livable and vibrant. That work will continue to be informed by the Department of Planning's citywide comprehensive planning process and will culminate in a community engagement effort in the coming months.

## Due Dillgence

### **12 IN ADDITION TO THE IMMEDIATE AND MEDIUM-TERM EFFORTS OUTLINED ABOVE, THE ADMINISTRATION IS UNDERTAKING DUE DILIGENCE AND PLANNING FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Improvement of Micromobility Infrastructure
2. Ensure Equitable Outcomes for The Redline Project
3. City Gateway & Enhancement Projects at Conway St, Howard St, and Pratt St.
4. Investment in Vehicular Signal Timing
5. Sharpen Focus on Vacant & Blighted Private Property in the DMA
6. Reorient traffic at Light & Pratt Street for McKeldin Park & Waterfront Connection



# RISE OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CLEANLINESS

## 1 POWER WASHING

DPOB is launching a power washing initiative to boost cleanliness in the DMA, focusing on addressing soiled sidewalks and alleyways. To kickstart this effort, DPOB will add power washing to their Clean & Green responsibilities within the DMA.

## 2 INCREASED STREET SWEEPING FREQUENCY AT HIGH TRAFFIC AREAS

The city will work with Downtown partnership efforts launching a targeted effort to enhance street sweeping services in the downtown core, particularly focusing on the 106 blocks within the Downtown Management Authority (DMA). This initiative prioritizes key areas, including the 300 to 400 block of E Baltimore, the unit block of S. Light, and intersections including Lombard to Baltimore Street and Saratoga and Charles.

## 3 DEBRIS RECEPTACLES: LARGER TRASH RECEPTACLES IN HIGH TRAFFIC AREAS

As part of the initiative to boost cleanliness in the DMA, the DPOB has initiated a plan to deploy larger and more easily maintained trash receptacles in high-traffic areas where current receptacles are overwhelmed by litter. Building on the success of a pilot program on Pratt Street, which received positive feedback from the community, DPOB aims to extend this effort across the downtown area.

# Public Safety & Cleanliness

## **4 DEBRIS RECEPTACLES: CIGARETTE WASTE & DOG WASTE**

DOT and DPOB are partnering to roll out new dog waste receptacles and cigarette waste receptacles across the DMA. Recognizing the importance of addressing litter and debris, this initiative aims to enhance cleanliness, mitigate health risks, and control pests effectively.

## **5 GRAFFITI REMOVAL, PREVENTION, ENFORCEMENT, AND SANCTIONING**

DPOB is launching a graffiti removal program that enables property owners within the DMA to apply for professional graffiti removal services. Additionally, the Mayor's Office has convened a Task Force to assess enforcement options, prevent illicit graffiti, and enhance sanctioned street art.

## **6 PUBLIC RESTROOMS**

With grant funding from MD DHCD, DPOB is working to bring lone-standing, public restrooms to the DMA to ensure that everyone downtown has access to restrooms.

## **7 MAINTAIN THE PROGRESS GAINED THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SQUEEGEE COLLABORATIVE'S WORKING ACTION PLAN**

The City began implementation of the Squeegee Collaborative's Working Action Plan in January 2023. Since that time we have seen an 85% decrease in criminal incidents related to squeegeeing and have placed over 40 young people in jobs. The work of the Squeegee Collaborative is not just about addressing the activity of squeegeeing, but working on the root causes leading disconnected youth to be on the corners. As the work continues the focus will be on expanding efforts to connect panhandlers with employment opportunities, housing supports, and consistent mentorship to support and encourage their development. Through [reviewing data weekly](#) and thanks to intense and consistent collaboration among BPD, the Mayor's Office of African American Male Engagement (MOAAME) and dozens of community stakeholders the work of the Squeegee Collaborative is creating a safer downtown and providing sustainable solutions for young people.

## **8 LEXINGTON MARKET, NUISANCE CRIME ENFORCEMENT**

The presence of nuisance crime, such as drug dealing, loitering, and illegal sales of goods outside of the iconic Lexington Market deters visitors and residents from engaging with the area. Addressing this issue is critical for maintaining and enhancing the economic vitality of Lexington Market and its surrounding community.

To effectively address the problem, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. This includes not only increasing police presence and implementing targeted enforcement strategies to deter criminal activity but investing in community-based initiatives such as job training, addiction support services, and social outreach programs can provide alternative pathways for individuals engaged in illegal activities.

This work must be conducted with sensitivity and respect for the rights and dignity of all individuals involved, and focus on community engagement, conflict resolution, and harm reduction, rather than punitive measures alone. By addressing nuisance crime near Lexington Market, Baltimore can create a safer, more vibrant environment that attracts visitors, encourages small business, and supports the long-term economic growth and prosperity of the area. This not only improves public safety but also promotes social inclusion and community well-being, ensuring that all residents and visitors feel welcome and valued in the Lexington Market neighborhood.

## **9 ESTABLISH A SECURITY OPERATIONS CENTER TO ADDRESS SAFETY AND SECURITY CONCERNS WITHIN DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE.**

The DPOB, in collaboration with UMB and BPD, is establishing a Security Operations Center (SOC) that will aid in centralizing safety, hospitality, and law enforcement measures specifically for the downtown core. In fall 2024 DPOB will pilot a temporary SOC to test and learn the technology while planning and preparing for a permanent center. The establishment of a SOC will significantly enhance downtown Baltimore's security infrastructure. By improving communication and coordination between agencies and stakeholders, the SOC will ensure more effective responses to safety and security issues, as identified in an independent security assessment. The continued use of trained security guards and contracted law enforcement at key intersections will further deter criminal activity and enhance public safety.

## **Due Dilligence**

### **10 IN ADDITION TO THE IMMEDIATE AND MEDIUM-TERM EFFORTS OUTLINED ABOVE, THE ADMINISTRATION IS UNDERTAKING DUE DILIGENCE AND PLANNING FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Enhanced Illegal Dumpster Enforcement
2. Study expanding auxiliary police to provide additional assistance with security, traffic, and parking enforcement.
3. For individuals suffering from substance use disorder and using drugs in public places, efforts to encourage people to accept treatment services.



**DATA & INSIGHTS PROVIDED BY**



**PHOTOS & DESIGN PROVIDED BY**

**sympatico**

**DOWNTOWN RISE PROVIDED BY**



**Brandon M. Scott**  
Mayor



# **RISE UP** **BALTIMORE**

Together, with focus, with intention, and with gritty determination, this plan will evolve as does our city. Our city of artists, of artisans, of businesspeople, of service leaders, of longshoremen, of professionals of all kinds, of youth and of seniors; we are Baltimore. We are downtown. And together, we RISE.



**[DowntownBaltimoreRise.com](http://DowntownBaltimoreRise.com)**