BUILDING FROM THE GROUND UP

an innovative approach to community development in baltimore's oliver neighborhood



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Developed for the Annie E. Casey Foundation by The Hatcher Group.

Building photos courtesy of TRF Development Partners.

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introduction

The Oliver community, only a couple of miles northeast of the city's business core, is just a sliver of East Baltimore that could be easily overlooked. To its east is a major redevelopment project that includes the world-renowned Johns Hopkins Hospital and medical campus. To its west is Green Mount Cemetery, the final resting place of many prominent Baltimoreans. Railroad tracks slice through and under the community, giving Amtrak passengers a brief glimpse of Oliver.

Once a stable neighborhood filled with sturdy brick row houses, thriving churches and small businesses, Oliver declined — along with much of the city — over the course of several decades, beginning in the 1960s. Many middle-class residents left, businesses folded, and some churches moved out of the area. By the turn of the 21st century, Oliver was in distress, with more than 1,100 abandoned homes or vacant lots, rampant drug dealing and little if any investment flowing into the community. The area's low point came in 2002, when a firebomb ripped through the home of a local family, killing seven, in retaliation for the family's efforts to rid the area of drug dealers. The tragedy shocked the community and a city hardened to news of violent crime.

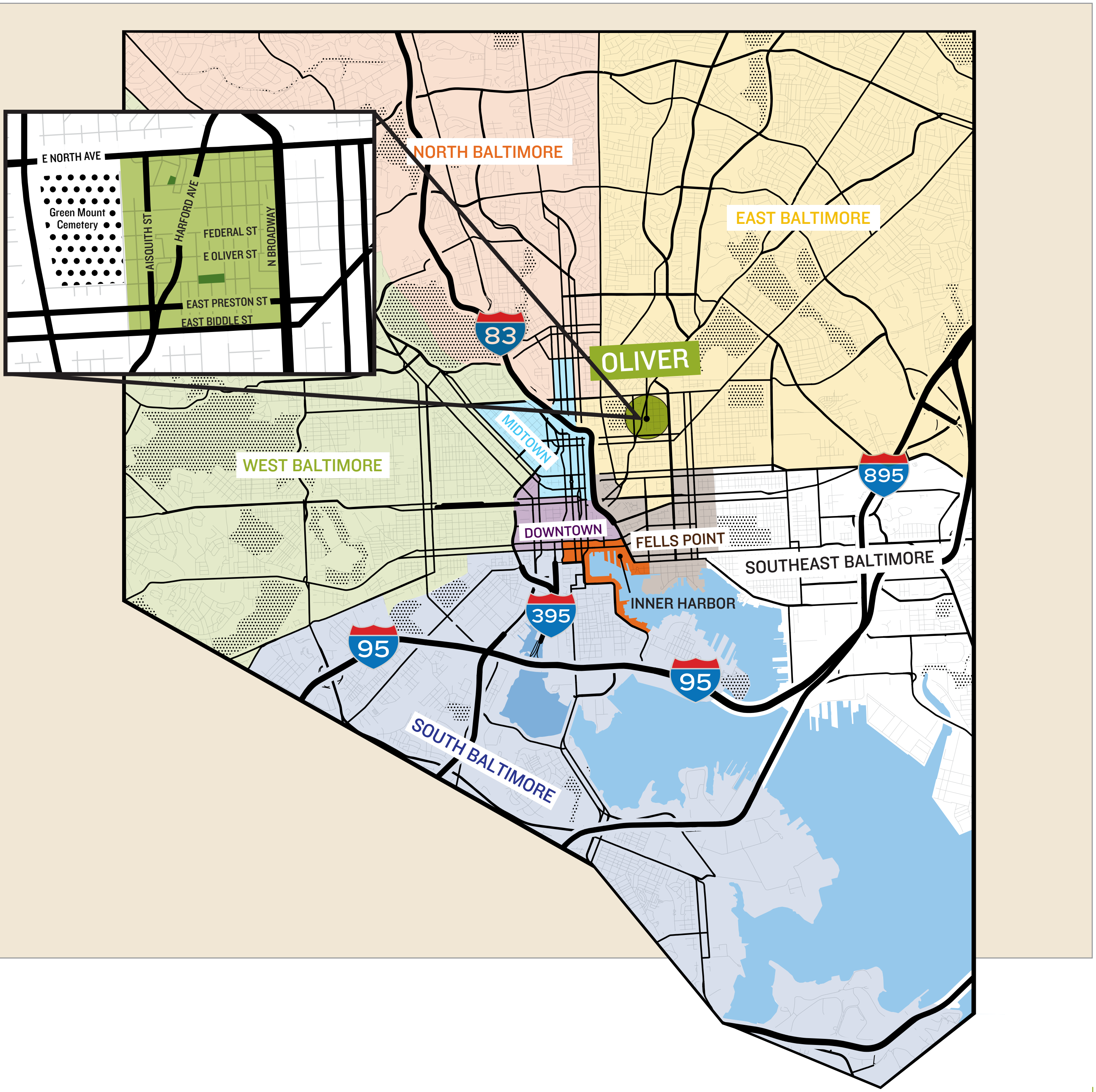
A decade later, signs of hope, progress and financial investment abound in Oliver. Over the past five years, more than 130 homes — rental and owner-occupied — have been built or rebuilt, and an ambitious strategy to build many more homes is underway. The undertaking has helped generate further redevelopment in the area and has included a successful program to help unemployed residents prepare for and move into jobs.

An unusual, market-driven redevelopment project has fueled this revival, bringing together the city's leading community organizing group — Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development (BUILD) — and The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), a nationally prominent community development financial institution.

BUILD recruited many partners and funders, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation and other Baltimore philanthropic institutions, which have played a role in this thoughtful and successful approach to restoring a struggling urban neighborhood.

This report details the history of the Oliver project, highlights its achievements and offers some lessons in community engagement, community-focused development and innovative financing of revitalization efforts. The unrest in Baltimore in spring 2015 has brought additional focus on the issues facing low-income communities in the city and across the nation. The lessons from Oliver can help funders, policymakers and others involved in addressing these issues and working to promote community development.

Once a stable neighborhood filled with sturdy brick row houses, thriving churches and small businesses, Oliver declined over several decades, beginning in the 1960s.


E NORTH AVE
Green Mount Cemetery
AISQUITH ST
HARFORD AVE
FEDERAL ST
E OLIVER ST
N BROADWAY
EAST PRESTON ST
EAST BIDDLE ST
NORTH BALTIMORE
EAST BALTIMORE
83
OLIVER
MIDTOWN
WEST BALTIMORE
895
DOWNTOWN
FELLS POINT
SOUTHEAST BALTIMORE
INNER HARBOR
395
95
95
SOUTH BALTIMORE

Rev. Calvin Keene at Memorial Baptist Church in Oliver.

“This is their community, and they have a lot of civic pride. They want to see their community rebound and thrive.”

the oliver project

Beginning in the mid-1990s, churches in the Oliver community were essentially the last remaining institutions, and they realized they had a role to play in revitalizing the neighborhood. Five churches — The Ark, Knox Presbyterian, Memorial Baptist, St. Francis Xavier Catholic and Zion Baptist — began raising money on their own to pay for community redevelopment and, over time, coordinating the services they offered to residents in need.

At Memorial Baptist Church, the congregation decided to make a financial commitment in the surrounding community to help shape its revitalization. The church's 150 members managed to raise, on average, about $3,000 per month to acquire neighborhood properties through a community development corporation that Memorial Baptist had created.

“This is their community, and they have a lot of civic pride,” said Rev. Calvin Keene, pastor of Memorial Baptist. “They want to see their community rebound and thrive.”

Over several years, the church raised about $250,000 to acquire 58 properties surrounding it. The properties were not costly; in one transaction, the church acquired an entire block of 23 homes — all vacant — for less than $100,000.

The other four churches followed suit, raising the funds necessary to acquire more property, and by 2001, all five of these small congregations had collected $1.2 million. With BUILD helping to coordinate their efforts, the churches purchased properties in the community, many of them through the city's tax sale process, and by 2013, they had acquired about 200 properties for redevelopment.

A STRONGER NEIGHBORHOOD

Rev. Calvin Keene grew up on Preston Street in Oliver and remembers a thriving, diverse community where doctors and other professionals lived with steelworkers, teachers and day laborers.

Things began to change in the 1960s. Good blue-collar jobs in Baltimore factories began to disappear, and the 1968 riots after the killing of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. fueled an exodus.

Over a 25-year period, the area lost residents, and drug dealing became more and more brazen. "Those who were able to move out did move out," recalled Keene, who in 1993 became pastor of his lifelong church, Memorial Baptist, in the heart of Oliver.

The neighborhood also suffered from speculators who failed to maintain homes after purchasing them and rented to tenants who contributed to the area's crime and drug problems.

Two decades later, Keene still leads Memorial Baptist. He has been closely involved with the Oliver redevelopment project since its beginning. He marvels at the many things that have gone right, including the partnership of Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development and The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), the community involvement and the commitment from so many funders.

The project has made great progress and created new hope in the neighborhood, but problems with crime and other issues persist. "We have to make sure we don't lose focus on the issues and the problems facing members of the community," Keene said.

Gary Crum, 30, also grew up in Oliver and saw its problems firsthand. Raised by his grandmother, Crum saw friends and relatives incarcerated and knew people who were murdered in the area.

"All of this area was vacant. It was an abandonment zone," Crum said. "As a kid, we weren't allowed to come outside here; it was too dangerous."

After his own run-in with the law, Crum got his life together, took some college courses and did data entry for a Head Start program. Eventually, he landed a job with TRF Development Partners (see p. 8 for more on this nonprofit developer), also doing data entry to support the Oliver project and the company's other efforts in Baltimore.

Crum is pleased to be part of restoring Oliver's vitality, and he sees tangible progress. The once omnipresent drug dealers are less of a problem, and young kids are more visible in the neighborhood.

"There are kids back on the block, people are outside, and the violence has slowed down," Crum said. "As they continue to build homes and get people in the area to take care of their homes, you'll start to create a neighborhood....It's coming together slowly but surely."

Crum plans to get a real estate license and would like to market properties in Oliver. "Ten years from now, it's going to be a beautiful neighborhood. It will be like, 'Wow, we've come a long way.' I want to make sure I'm a part of it."

Rob English (second from right) and Terrell Williams (far left) walk with residents in the Oliver community.

the role of community organizing

Along with its coordinated fundraising and property acquisition, BUILD became increasingly active with organizing in the neighborhood. An affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation — the national community-organizing network that works with religious institutions and community groups — BUILD has been an important force in Baltimore since 1977. Through its network of member churches, it has been a leader in advocating on issues such as discriminatory real estate restrictions, school funding, the living wage and after-school programming. In the late 1980s, BUILD turned to housing and spearheaded the Nehemiah Homes project in West Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester community, creating more than 750 homes for low-income individuals and families in partnership with Enterprise Community Partners and others.

By the late 1990s, BUILD focused on deepening its presence on the city's east side, which also contended with considerable challenges and poverty, and organizers began working with the Oliver churches and parents at Dr. Bernard Harris Sr. Elementary School in the neighborhood.

BUILD led a listening campaign, in which 150 volunteers went door to door throughout Oliver to ask residents about their concerns and goals. They found that community residents were desperate for improvements to address blight. Having so many abandoned houses in the neighborhood created major problems, drug dealing was endemic, and residents lacked jobs. Volunteers heard stories about police helicopters flying over the school and telling teachers to take the children back inside because of unsafe conditions in the area.

Tragedy struck the community one night in October 2002, when the Oliver home owned by Angela and Carnell Dawson was attacked. The Dawson family had repeatedly called police to report drug activity, prompting drug dealers to retaliate. They firebombed the Dawson house on one occasion, then set it afire two weeks later in the middle of the night. Both parents and five of their children died.

The Dawson family tragedy "galvanized" the work of BUILD and its member churches, recalled Rob English, then the lead organizer for BUILD. "It helped lead to an intentional strategy to rebuild the community."

a partnership with the reinvestment fund

After generating community support and a commitment from churches to devote their resources to revitalizing the neighborhood, BUILD began working on a redevelopment plan, turning to The Reinvestment Fund, based in Philadelphia, for assistance. TRF had a long track record of community lending and had impressed BUILD's sister organization in Philadelphia with its planning and financing of community revitalization.

TRF understood the need to have the community involved in redevelopment efforts and embraced the Oliver project. At BUILD's request, the Annie E. Casey Foundation provided funding that allowed TRF to create a development plan. To help inform the plan, about 100 BUILD members assessed each property and compiled a thorough inventory of property conditions.

As the plan was being developed, some community members wanted to begin with the area's most devastated blocks. TRF advised a different course, focused on building from strength, which BUILD ultimately accepted.

"Our goal was to stop investing based only on the needs in a community. That need inspires you, but you don't invest on that basis," said Sean Closkey, president of TRF Development Partners, who led the work. "You have to look at what is reasonable for that market and what type of investment will actually improve the market."

While Oliver itself was struggling, the larger East Baltimore community had assets to build on. In particular, the Johns Hopkins medical campus to the east was one of the biggest employers in Maryland, and the area north of the hospital was part of the East Baltimore Revitalization Initiative (see p. 15 for more about the initiative). The Oliver plan called for building new homes closer to the area abutting the redevelopment zone to the east. The logic of that decision was straightforward. "Hopkins was already awesome; it's only going to be more awesome" as the redevelopment effort moves forward there, Closkey said.

"Ten years from now, it's going to be a beautiful neighborhood. It will be like, 'Wow, we've come a long way.'"

Gary Crum is an Oliver resident who works with TRF Development Partners.

a market-driven approach

TRF saw its goal as creating a new real estate market in a community where there essentially was none. Roughly 40 percent of the properties in the area were vacant or abandoned, existing homes had little value on the market, and average household income was less than $20,000.

While community development entities generally focus on building a project, TRF wanted to build a market by reinvigorating the community to the point that homeowners and renters would once again desire to move there. TRF did a market analysis of the entire area and found there was demand for affordable homes — costing less than $250,000 — in the city's central core. People were interested in homes near downtown, the train station, the nearby Baltimore City Public Schools administration building and the thriving Johns Hopkins medical complex. Oliver fell in the middle of that nexus.

TRF's development plan aimed to create new or rebuilt homes that would retain residents of the area, attract new residents and eventually foster a new real estate market in Oliver. Over time, the value of all properties in the neighborhood would rise, which would create new assets for all homeowners — those who had stuck it out, as well as newcomers.

A critical question was who would be the developer to handle the actual work prudently while respecting the community's desires. TRF and BUILD reached an unusual agreement. Instead of bringing in an outside developer, the two organizations created in 2006 a new nonprofit entity, TRF Development Partners (TRF DP), combining their strengths. BUILD had long and deep ties to the community and a base of influence with elected officials rooted in churches and its after-school programming. TRF lent the project credibility with its history of making smart community investments. The organization was overseen by a board that includes ministers from churches affiliated with BUILD, attorneys and building contractors.

Finding the capital to build homes to create a new Oliver market was difficult. No major government programs are geared to fund such developments. Instead, TRF Development Partners recognized it would have to raise funds from investors. The nonprofit set a goal of raising $10 million to fuel the project, with BUILD and TRF making significant contributions.

BUILD reached out to a prominent Baltimore business leader to champion the project and secure new investors: Anthony Deering, then the chief executive officer of the Rouse Company. Rouse had supported previous BUILD initiatives, including the Nehemiah Homes project. Deering agreed to help raise capital for the Oliver project. A selling point was the $1.2 million already committed by the five neighborhood churches, which gave them a financial stake in its success.

The partnership of Deering — an experienced real estate development leader — the faith community, schools and neighborhoods (BUILD) with a leading community lender (TRF) attracted investments from 23 foundations, banks, churches and other philanthropic organizations.

The Casey Foundation committed the final $500,000 investment in the effort. In all, TRF Development Partners raised $9.3 million in investment capital for the project. It was, Deering recalled, "the most diverse group [of funders] I've ever seen."

BUILD, meanwhile, continued to push Baltimore City elected officials to devote additional funding to rebuild struggling communities like Oliver, arguing that the city needed to invest

A FOCUS ON ECONOMIC INCLUSION

The Oliver project has provided new job opportunities to local residents, including former Maryland state inmates participating in Jericho Reentry, a nearby job-training program of the Episcopal Community Services of Maryland.

In 2012, TRF Development Partners formed a partnership with Baltimore's Safe and Sound Campaign, the People's Homesteading Group and Jericho to create a training program in safe deconstruction work for previously incarcerated individuals. These trained workers would then do some of the necessary deconstruction work in homes being gutted or razed as part of the Oliver project.

Jericho oversees the training program and provides support and case management to men and women upon their release. Through an agreement developed by Safe and Sound with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, the state contributes funding to the program and identifies inmates who are suitable candidates. Three parole agents monitor the Jericho participants on-site to ensure compliance with the terms of their release.

Jericho participants go through an intense two-week training program to prepare them for reentering the workforce, as well as job-search and employment support. The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) has helped program participants find work with subcontractors for TRF housing projects in the area.

Since 2009, more than 250 Jericho participants have graduated from the program. More than 60 percent have been continually employed since their graduation. At the project's peak, more than 40 participants were working on the Oliver redevelopment project. And Jericho graduates have a recidivism rate of 5 percent, compared to the state's rate of 40 percent. The training and employment opportunities offered by the Oliver project to a traditionally overlooked segment of the workforce have been essential to turning lives around in Baltimore City.

A class at Jericho Reentry in East Baltimore.

more in those communities at a time when major spending was beginning on a new hotel near the downtown convention center. In 2005, under pressure from BUILD and its thousands of active members, the city of Baltimore created a $59 million fund for affordable housing, and the first funds allocated — a total $1.2 million — were earmarked for the Oliver project.

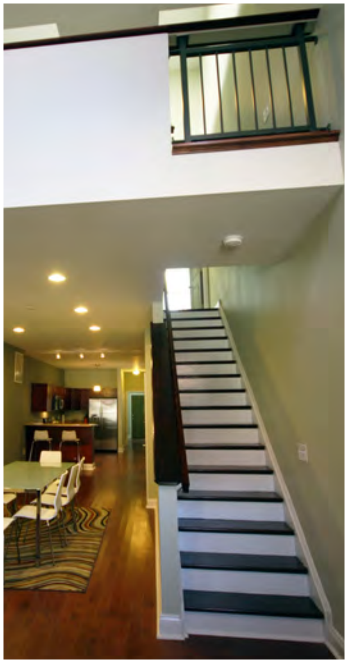
The successful fundraising allowed the TRF Development Partners plan to move forward, although progress came gradually. By 2008, the first tangible results were seen: modular homes that were part of a new Oliver development named Preston Place, across the street from Memorial Baptist Church. *The Baltimore Sun* described the residences as "the first new houses in the Oliver neighborhood in half a century."

The modular homes were built off-site and then assembled with a crane in Oliver. They are energy efficient, which reduces living costs for occupants, and sold initially for about $139,000, a price that was affordable to many low- and moderate-income people. The location for the first homes was chosen for its visibility on a major east-west street; passersby would see tangible evidence of progress and begin to feel confidence in the project's viability.

The first wave of building, though, came just as the economy collapsed in 2008. The mortgage market retrenched, and TRF Development Partners was forced to scale back the project. The Casey and Rouse foundations stepped in with grants during the worst of the recession to make sure that TRF Development Partners stayed in business and that the project would keep progressing, even while other community development efforts stalled.

As the recession eased, construction picked up. Most recently, TRF Development Partners has begun rehabbing large, three-story homes on Broadway, one of the main north-south arteries in the area. To make the rehabbed homes more affordable, TRF Development Partners created a loft-style rehab design that reduces the square footage of the homes' interiors by including two-story loft spaces on the first and second floors (see Figure 2 on p. 20). As originally built, the homes have far more interior space than most families need. Reducing the interior space reduces rehab costs, which in turn reduces the cost of buying or renting the refurbished homes.

The impact of the loft design change is an important element of TRF Development Partners' success. The contemporary interior design in a traditional historic building attracted a new and different group of buyers who normally would have passed over Oliver but, based on the design and price of the loft units, chose to live in the neighborhood.



Loft renovations, before and after.

Renovation of homes on Broadway, before and after.

results to date

Since 2008, TRF Development Partners has redeveloped 231 formerly abandoned properties in the Oliver neighborhood, and 126 lots have been consolidated for reuse. New residents in these homes have cut the neighborhood's vacancy rate by 61 percent. Of the residents in Preston Place, one-third moved into Baltimore City, and two-thirds relocated from homes within the city. Half of the residents who relocated from city homes were from East Baltimore. They include Johns Hopkins employees, teachers and city and state employees.[1] The median income of these newcomers is about $41,000, more than double the average income of the community before the project.

The project has helped fulfill the goal of reestablishing a real estate market in Oliver. In 2006 and 2007, before TRF Development Partners' work began, only one home valued above $100,000 was sold in Oliver. Since then, more than 80 properties have sold for prices higher than $100,000. This has been a slowly building trend connected to the elimination of abandoned properties.

Several residential investors had joined TRF Development Partners in Oliver, and the latter's sales in 2014 accounted for 11 percent of total sales in the neighborhood. With the median price for home sales remaining above $225,000 (see Figure 1 on p. 12), the market appears to be strong enough to support continued private redevelopment of for-sale housing with little TRF DP involvement.

The Oliver project did not unfold as quickly as its leaders had hoped, due in part to a depressed economy. And in the home-buying environment following the 2008 collapse of the housing market, it has proven more difficult than expected to secure mortgages for many would-be homebuyers. In response, TRF Development Partners opened more of its new homes to renters. TRF DP also tapped into federal Low-Income Housing Tax

[1] One incentive for people to move into the area is the Live Near Your Work program, a partnership between Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore City, the state of Maryland and other organizations. The program offers grants to eligible Hopkins employees for down payments or closing costs on homes in designated neighborhoods near Hopkins, including Oliver.

Credit financing to support the rehab project, which required renting the homes for a period of time. The mix of renters and homeowners will continue to change, depending on the market.

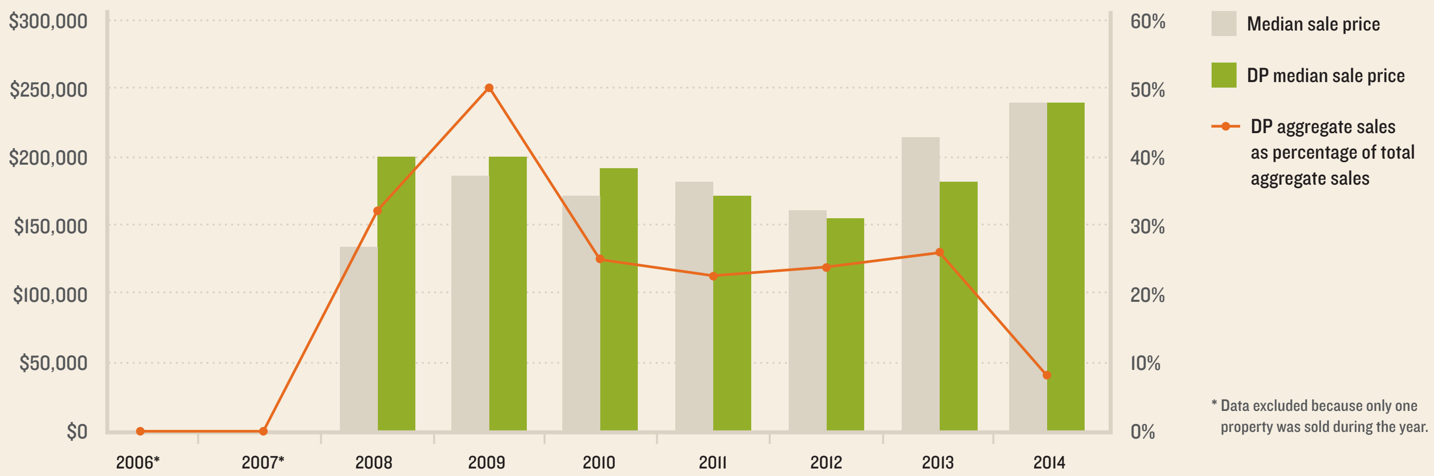
Leaders of the redevelopment are pleased with the progress even as they continue to focus on long-term results. "This story isn't finished; it's a 10- to 15-year story," Closkey said. "We have a strategy, and we're sticking to the strategy."

Even as the home building in Oliver continues, TRF Development Partners has expanded its build-on-strength strategy into nearby areas:

- The City Arts project created 17 loft-style townhomes designed for local artists with low or moderate incomes in the Station North Arts and Entertainment District, a few blocks west of Oliver. TRF DP is developing 15 additional units throughout the area.
- TRF DP worked with Homes for America and Jubilee Baltimore to develop the City Arts apartment building, which has 69 energy-efficient apartments that have been fully leased since the building opened in 2010. In 2014, the city of Baltimore awarded the same partnership funding to develop City Arts 2, a 61-unit building two blocks north of the original City Arts building.
- TRF DP has recently teamed up with East Baltimore Development Inc. to rehab homes that are part of EBDI's ongoing community revitalization initiative at a site just east of Oliver.

The work in Oliver has sparked several other investments that are further stabilizing the neighborhood. The Come Home Baltimore initiative is rehabbing and selling homes in Oliver, and the Lillian Jones Apartments in nearby Johnston Square, which were developed by Baltimore's French Companies, are available to low- and moderate-income tenants.

FIGURE 1. MEDIAN SALE PRICE OF REHABBED HOMES: TRF DP PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SALES



Row houses in Oliver, before and after.

lessons

Over a decade, the Oliver project has brought together a wide range of partners — residents, businesses, churches, foundations and community development experts — to reinvigorate a neighborhood that struggled to contend with disinvestment and concentrated poverty. Key players have identified important lessons that can help inform community development efforts throughout the country.

Community development requires patience and flexibility. The Oliver project's roots date back to the mid-1990s, when some churches began acquiring vacant properties in the area. It took several years to form a partnership between TRF and BUILD, secure support from key government agencies, develop buy-in from the community and assemble investors. The first homes were not erected until 2008. In short, patience was key.

The project, like many others across the country, was hit hard by the economic collapse in late 2008, which came only six months after the first homes were built and put on the market. The recession and housing market decline threatened to derail the Oliver project entirely, and some investors were resigned to losing their capital investments. The development company reduced its expenses, and the Casey and Rouse foundations stepped in to provide operating support that allowed the project to survive the downturn.

In recent years, the Oliver project has found it difficult to sell its new and rebuilt homes, largely due to increased scrutiny by mortgage lenders. In response, more homes are being rented, and those new residents are helping to revitalize the community. Even with that shift, the project's leaders remain optimistic about its long-term chances of reinvigorating the market in Oliver, particularly because all rehabbed homes sold in the past two years were priced in excess of $175,000. Although the Oliver sales activity is limited to a handful of transactions, as mortgage lending improves, TRF Development Partners will increase the number of homes sold in the area and plans to convert its existing rental housing into ownership opportunities for first-time buyers.

Engaging the community is critical. The Oliver project is unusual in that it grew organically out of a true community-organizing effort launched by BUILD. Organizers, members of the community and churches envisioned the project and gave it initial momentum. Redevelopment took off once BUILD formed a partnership with TRF, which shared the commitment to giving the community a say in the project. BUILD has maintained community involvement throughout the project, including having members serve on the board of TRF Development Partners. Its demonstrated commitment to continue working in Oliver has helped sustain momentum.

The Oliver community has not always agreed about the development plans, but residents have continually had the opportunity to have their voices heard and to influence the project — largely through BUILD. Indeed, the power that the community built through BUILD's organizing within member churches and directly in the neighborhood was critical in attracting the involvement of TRF, civic leaders and, eventually, elected officials.

Identifying innovative financing for affordable housing should be a priority. TRF Development Partners has received funding from Baltimore City for property acquisition and infrastructure and from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to assist with down payments and closing costs. The vast majority of public sector housing resources are restricted to low-income rental housing, and there are few, if any, public programs designed to support the kind of broad economic renewal and revitalization that TRF Development Partners has pursued in Oliver. Because of that, the project has had to raise money through civic-minded investors, including churches and philanthropic institutions.

These pooled resources have come with few of the restrictions that are typical with most public funding. Having that kind of funding support has given the Oliver project the financial flexibility to build homes that are affordable to many low- and moderate-income people, with sale prices ranging from $99,000 to $240,000 and rents ranging from $700 to $1,500 per month.

Finally, the success TRF Development Partners has had in marketing the redesigned, and more affordable, loft-style homes reinforces the need for smart design that meets the needs of the market.

Creating new economic opportunities for residents should be part of community development. In distressed communities like Oliver, the issues affecting residents are deep and complex. Building or refurbishing affordable homes is essential to stabilizing such neighborhoods. But economically struggling communities will not rebound through new construction or rehabilitation alone. Residents may well continue to lack access to the tools and skills they need to achieve stability, such as education and training, financial education or other support services. Improvements to the physical infrastructure must be coupled with efforts to provide new economic opportunities to residents. In the Oliver case, a pilot program has had success in training and placing formerly incarcerated residents of the area in jobs. Although the job-training initiative is relatively modest, it complements similar training and support programs that are also available to low-income residents in the neighborhood.

Anthony Deering, an experienced real estate development leader, embraced the TRF approach of building from strength and helped raise capital for the Oliver project.

TWO APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Oliver project has received far less attention than a nearby redevelopment effort: the East Baltimore Revitalization Initiative. That project, which launched in 2001, focuses on an economically distressed neighborhood north of the Johns Hopkins medical campus, which includes Johns Hopkins Hospital. The initiative aims to transform an 88-acre area in the neighborhood into a mixed-income community with new homes, improved schools and safety, new retail outlets, more engaged residents and a larger employment base.

Leading the initiative is a nonprofit established to manage the project, East Baltimore Development Inc. (EBDI), which is governed by a board that has included representatives from the community, the Casey Foundation, the Johns Hopkins institutions (the university and medical campus), the city of Baltimore, the state of Maryland and local and national philanthropies.

The Oliver project itself sought to capitalize on the momentum generated by the East Baltimore Revitalization Initiative to the east. While both projects are designed to revitalize similarly distressed areas of East Baltimore, they have used different strategies.

The EBDI-led project used eminent domain to claim ownership of properties within the redevelopment zone, and 742 households were required to relocate, generally to communities faring better economically. The project made it a priority to help those being relocated build a life in their new homes, providing generous relocation benefits and support services. The project has also committed to generating economic development for the area, including workforce training, to strengthen the community. As in Oliver, the project was slowed by the recession, though work does continue in several areas.

The Oliver project has used a different strategy for what is a far smaller endeavor. While the East Baltimore Revitalization Initiative focused on community and economic development to revitalize the neighborhood, the Oliver project was community-initiated, solely focusing on strengthening the neighborhood. Over time, the project seeks to reinvigorate the real estate market in the community, which will increase the value of all properties. Leaders of the effort are optimistic that long-time residents will be able to remain in their homes as the redevelopment continues, building equity as market values go up.

EBDI has recognized TRF Development Partners' long experience with rehabbing residential properties and has entered into a partnership with TRF DP for 190 EBDI properties. Construction on these units began in 2014. The leaders of both efforts recognize that the success of one will bolster the success of the other.

conclusion

The Oliver project stands as a model for innovative community development. Intensive community organizing laid the groundwork for the project, with anchor institutions — in this case, churches — providing critical early funding. A community-organizing entity coordinated and inspired the project, while an experienced community development nonprofit helped shape the development strategy.

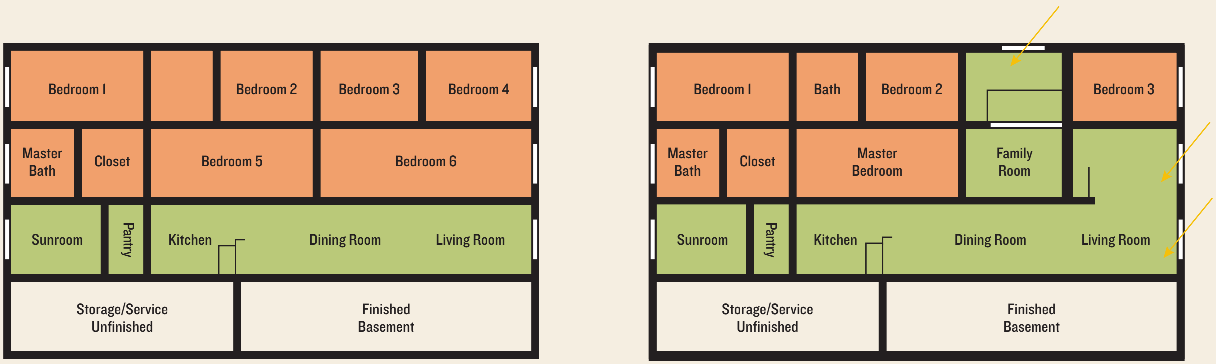
The project has led to the creation of more than 230 new homes that are affordable to lower- and middle-income families and individuals and has helped rejuvenate the real estate market in an area that had suffered from decades of disinvestment.

With the economy growing and other developers involved, leaders of the project are optimistic that it will continue to create affordable new homes for homeowners and renters and strengthen real estate values. As it moves toward this goal, the project is also creating new hope for the Oliver community.

acknowledgments

We thank those who provided information for this report, including Sean Closkey and Gary Crum of The Reinvestment Fund; Rob English of BUILD; Rev. Calvin Keene of Memorial Baptist Church; Hathaway Ferebee and John Friedel of the Safe and Sound Campaign; and Anthony Deering.

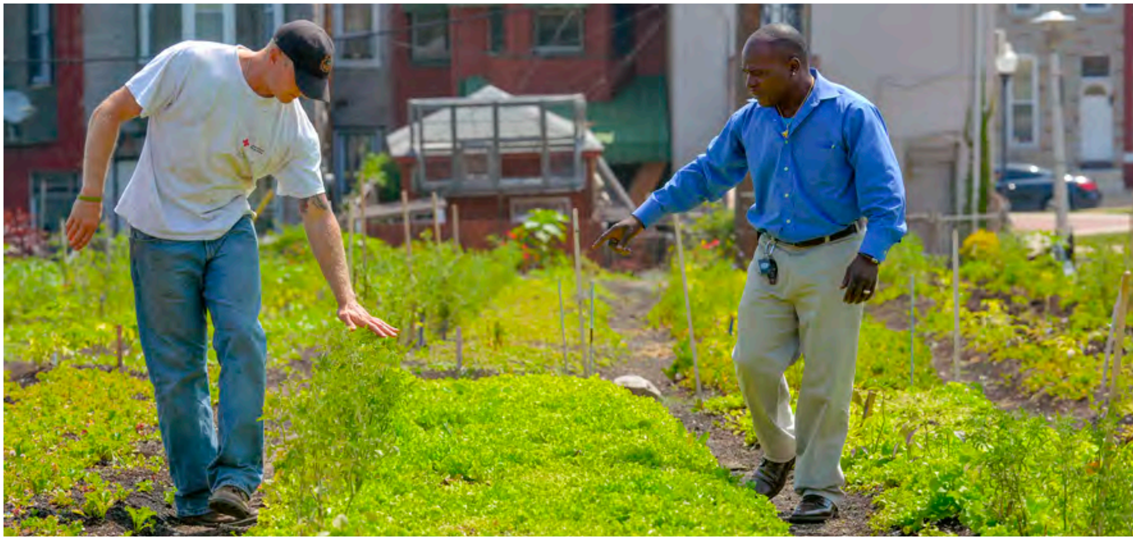
FIGURE 2



Original Unit: 2,292 sq. ft.

FInal Unit: 2,075 sq. ft.

These two schematics show TRF Development Partners' loft-style floor plans, a more modern look that departed from the typical row house design and saved construction costs. The original layout features several bedrooms and separated spaces that have lost favor among many buyers. The new one presents two-story spaces in the living and family rooms, which bring more light (represented by the arrows to the right) and volume into interior spaces and an inside balcony. Reducing more than 200 square feet of interior area lowers material and construction costs that can, in turn, lower the home price.



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