

# The Community Capacity Building Impact of the Baltimore Empowerment Zone

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# Research Overview

- Baltimore was awarded a Federal Empowerment Zone in December 1994
- The Federal Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community Program
  - Major Urban Initiative of the Clinton Administration
  - Based On Four Fundamental Principles:
    - Economic Opportunity;
    - *Sustainable Community Development*;
    - *Community-based Partnerships*; And
    - A Strategic And Comprehensive Vision For Change.
  - 6 EZ Communities (Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia) - \$100 million, Tax Credits, waivers, etc.

# The Empowerment Zone in Baltimore

- Two-Tiered Implementation Strategy
  - Recognized as Most Community-Driven
  - EBMC an Independent Non-Profit Management Entity
    - Overall Planning and Oversight
    - Controlled Budget and Evaluation
    - Dominated By the City's Business and Foundation Elite
    - Focus on Workforce Development; Economic Development; Community Capacity Building; and Quality of Life.
  - Village Centers
    - Community Based Organizations (CBOs) – In Charge of Implementation of Programs
    - 6 Village Centers Created – 5 as New Organizations
    - 4 Remain in Operation Today

# The Empowerment Zone in Baltimore

**Map 1**  
Baltimore City Empowerment Zone



Created by BNIA-JFI, 2008

## Village Centers

1. Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition (HEBCAC)
2. East Harbor Village Center
3. Washington Village/Pigtown Neighborhood Planning Council
4. The Village Center of Poppleton
5. Harlem Park/Lafayette Square Village Center
6. The Self-Motivated Community People's Village Center

# Timeline

- Awarded EZ December 1994
- Issued Village Center Guidelines in April 1995

**Table 1**  
**Milestones in the Formation and Operation of**  
**The Six Village Centers of The Baltimore Empowerment Zone**

Milestone	HEBCAC	East Harbor	Washington Village/ Pigtown	Poppleton	Harlem Park	Self-Motivated
Application Accepted	September 1995	February 1996	September 1995	February 1996	February 1996	September 1995
1st Admin. Funding Agreement	May 1996	June 1996	March 1996	September 1997	August 1997	June 1996
2nd Admin. Funding Agreement	May 1997	June 1997	March 1997	January 2001	January 2000	August 1997
3rd Admin. Funding Agreement	May 1998	June 1998	October 1998	June 2002	October 2001	June 1998
4th Admin. Funding Agreement	July 1999	June 1999	January 2000	June 2003	January 2003	June 1999
5th Admin. Funding Agreement	July 2000	June 2000	January 2001	June 2004	January 2004	Terminated
Transitional Funding Year 1	July 2001	November 2003	January 2003			
Transitional Funding Year 2	July 2003		January 2004			
Transitional Funding Year 3	July 2004					
Land Use Plan	1997	1997	1996	2001	1999	1998
Career Center Opens	August 1997	November 1997	September 1997	December 1999	September 1998	November 1998
Current Status	Operating	Operating	Operating	Successor Operating	Closed in 2004	Closed in 2000

# Research Questions

## **Primary Research Question**

*Can a federal policy that links the long-term provision of discretionary federal resources to the creation of new or expansion of existing community-based organizations result in the development of sustainable organizations that are effecting positive change?*

*Answer: Maybe, but with much difficulty and great chance of failure.*

## **Secondary Research Questions**

1. What internal (community) factors influence the development of community development capacity
2. What external (political, policy, social, and economic) factors influence the development of community development capacity?

# What is Community Development Capacity?

Rich Literature on Community Capacity – Focused on **All** Elements of Community Capacity

This Research Focused on The Capacity of **Community Organizations**

Definition Used:

*The Resources And Assets That Can Be Deployed By Community Organizations To Address Threats To Or Opportunities For The Community*

**Table 2**  
**Five Core Components of Community Organization Capacity<sup>1</sup>**

Issue	Definition
1) Strategic Planning	A clear consistent statement of mission and goals that guides operations and is periodically updated.
2) Leadership	Leaders organize, manage and give direction to the organization.
a) Staff Leadership	Competent managers to direct and staff to implement programs.
b) Board Leadership	Representative and engaged community leaders and institutional representatives to oversee community change activities.
3) Management and Resources	Effective policies and procedures and sufficient resources to deliver needed services.
a) Financial Management and Resources	Adequate financial resources and sound fiscal management.
b) Operations Management	Adequate staff and organizational resources to achieve goals.
c) Oversight, Monitoring and Evaluation	Systems to track and evaluate performance and efficiency.
4) Internal Networks - Community Relations	Networks and linkages within the community.
a) Community Participation	Community participation and engagement in community change efforts.
b) Institutional Participation	The participation and engagement of core local institutions in community change efforts.
b) Representation	The participation and engagement of core local institutions in community change efforts.
c) Community Outreach/Organizing	Bringing community residents together for collective action.
d) Communications	Dissemination of relevant community and organizational issues opportunities and performance.
5) External Networks	Networks and linkages to broader external economic, policy and social systems.

(1) This analysis of community organization capacity draws on concepts described in several sources - most importantly Chaskin et al. (2001), Glickman and Servon (1997), Nye and Glickman (2000), Milward and Provan (2000), and Sidor (n.d.).



# What was the Community Capacity Building Impact of the Baltimore EZ?

- Two Very Successful Village Centers
  - East Harbor and Washington Village
  - EZ was Successful in these Communities – But Theory Would Predict Difficulty
    - Diverse Communities
    - Lack of (Washington Village) or Problems With (East Harbor) Large Community Organization
    - In the Path of Redevelopment
  - Why was EZ Successful?
    - Strong Leadership – Staff (East Harbor) and Board (Wash. Village)
    - Involved Institutions (External Networks)
    - Community Momentum

# What was the Community Capacity Building Impact of the Baltimore EZ?

- Two Moderate Successes
  - HEBCAC – Substantial Early Success – National Best Practice
    - Strong Staff and Board - Strong External Networks
    - **But** – Undone by Politics
      - Change in Mayors / Change in EDO
    - Still Operational and Strong – but Replaced by EBDI for a large redevelopment effort
  - Poppleton – Accidental Success
    - Village Center Closed – But a Successor CDC remains in Operation
    - Failure as a Village Center
      - Too Strong a Leader
      - Lack of Community Buy-in For Empowerment Zone / EBMC Goals
    - Benefited from Several Large Redevelopments

# What was the Community Capacity Building Impact of the Baltimore EZ?

- Two Failures

- Self-Motivated – Closed in 2000
  - Loss of Dynamic Leader – Misuse of Funds
  - History – Failed Redevelopment Attempt
  - Geography – Combined Neighborhoods with Little History of Cooperation
  - Awkward Board Structure – Groups Fighting Over \$
- Harlem Park – Closed in 2004 (just as EBMC was transitioning)
  - Successfully Implemented EZ Programs
  - History – Failed Redevelopment Attempt – 1<sup>st</sup> Urban Renewal – 1956
  - Too Small a Community / No Institutions / No Momentum / Served by 2 Existing Organizations
  - Lack of Strong Leadership / Institutions / Networks
  - Misuse of Funds (Alleged) in 2004

# What was the Community Capacity Building Impact of the Baltimore EZ?

**Table 3**  
**Baltimore Empowerment Zone Village Center Success in Achieving the**  
**Core Components of Community Organization Capacity**

Issue	HEBCAC	East Harbor	Washington Village/ Pigtown	Poppleton	Harlem Park	Self-Motivated
1) Strategic Planning	Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Moderate	Weak	Weak
2) Leadership						
a) Staff Leadership	Strong	Strong	Strong (1)	Weak	Weak	Weak
b) Board Leadership	Moderate	Weak	Very Strong	Strong (2)	Weak	Weak
3) Management						
a) Financial Management	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak	Weak	Weak
b) Operations Management	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak	Moderate	Weak
c) Oversight, Monitoring and Evaluation	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak
4) Internal Networks - Community Relations						
a) Community Participation	Weak	Moderate (3)	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak
b) Institutional Participation	Strong	Strong	Strong	Moderate (4)	Weak	Weak
b) Representation	Moderate	Moderate (3)	Strong	Moderate (3)	Moderate	Moderate
c) Community Outreach	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
d) Communications	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
5) External Networks	Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Moderate (5)	Weak	Weak

(1) Washington Village/Pigtown suffered from a high degree of turnover - but each of the directors hired had strong leadership capabilities.

(2) However, Poppleton suffered from having its board controlled by a dominant board leader.

(3) East Harbor and Poppleton both did a strong job in representing the African American Community - but both failed to achieve a high degree of participation by the white community.

(4) Poppleton had little institutional participation until late in the EZ period - when it was able to work with University of Maryland, Baltimore on a major redevelopment project.

(5) For most of its operational period, Poppleton had weak external networks. However, as a major redevelopment project came to the community in the last years of the Zone, the village center was able to form a strong and positive linkage with the University of Maryland, Baltimore to support and represent the community in the development effort and is now playing that role in other developments.

# Application to Future Initiatives

Future efforts to implement community-based strategies should:

- Allow sufficient time for community mobilization and planning, at least a year to eighteen months before program implementation;
- Target communities with 6-8,000 residents and containing and some interested stakeholder institutions;
- Target communities where there are at least some development potential, and preferably, some redevelopment occurring;
- Focus on addressing community-identified needs and issues;
- Provide sufficient technical assistance, especially in the areas of conflict resolution, board and leadership development; and
- Design accountability, monitoring, sustainability planning, and evaluation into the process.

# Application to Future Initiatives

The success of future efforts to implement community- based strategies will depend on:

- The development of strong leaders, drawn where possible from the local community;
- Effective communications strategies, both between funding agencies and community organizations and between community organizations and the residents they serve;
- Effective, hands on, mobilization strategies to inform and engage community residents;
- The development of internal networks, linking the community organization with their service area;
- The development of external networks, linking the community organization to core external stakeholders, such as City agencies or foundations; and
- Sufficient time and resources to support a long term effort.

# 12 Lessons Learned

1. ***Community Capacity Building Is a Time Intensive Process.***
  - EBMC Goal of Five Year Spend-down Was Unrealistic and Damaged the Effort.
2. ***Community Change Efforts Should Target Appropriately Sized and Resourced Communities.***
  - HEBCAC (32,000) Too Big – Harlem Park (4,500) - Too Small.
3. ***An Early Focus on Sustainability Is Critical in Community Building .***
  - EBMC Did Not Build Sustainability Planning Into Process From the Beginning.
4. ***Community Centered Planning and Strategies Are Critical for Success.***
  - EBMC's Top Down and Rushed Strategy Reduce Community Support and Participation.
5. ***Community Change Efforts Must Recognize and Address the Legacy of Past Efforts.***
  - *It Was Difficult to Overcome Resident Cynicism and Mobilize the Community in Village Centers With a History of Failed Efforts.*
6. ***Conflict Resolution Is Essential for Building Strong Community Organizations.***
  - The Village Centers That Spent the Most Time Overcoming Internal Conflicts Were the Most Successful.

# 12 Lessons Learned

7. ***The Presence of Strong, Engaged Local Leadership Is Critical to the Success of Community-building Efforts.***
  - The Successful Village Centers Had Strong Board or Staff Leadership (Preferably Both).
8. ***Community Mobilization Is Important, but Difficult.***
  - Engaging the Community Is Difficult – Even in a Well-funded Effort.
9. ***Effective Communication Is Essential in Any Community Capacity Building Effort***
  - Internal and External Communications Are Critical – Controlling Expectations Is Important.
10. ***Building internal networks within and external networks outside of target communities is essential for building strong community organizations.***
  - The successful village centers formed strong internal and external networks.
11. ***Politics can support or hinder the development of community development capacity.***
  - The experience of HEBAC shows that an effort can go from a national best practice to finding a new basic mission as a result of political changes.
12. ***Goal setting, monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance are critical.***
  - EBMC's monitoring and evaluation system found and in many cases was able to remedy problems.