

MIDDLE NEIGHBORHOODS

May-June 2020 Newsletter

COVID-19 and Protests Challenge and Inspire Middle Neighborhoods



In the Greater Chatham neighborhoods of Chicago, protests against police brutality and the murder of George Floyd were mostly peaceful, but many businesses nonetheless sustained damage. The four neighborhoods of Greater Chatham have also been hit hard by COVID-19. Photo by Greater Chatham Initiative



COVID-19 Brings Out the Best in Greenmount West Neighbors

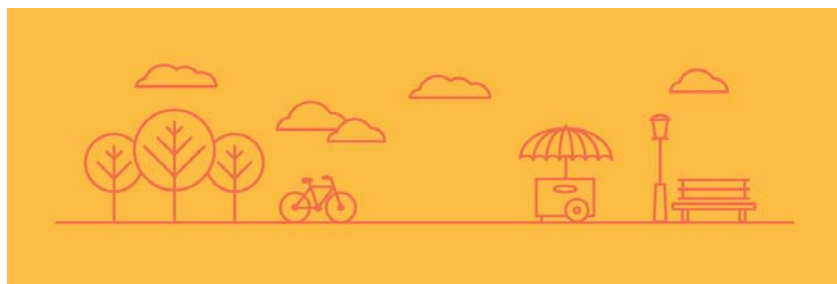
The Greenmount West neighborhood of Baltimore was a classic middle neighborhood when it was built in the late 1800s, and remained a middle neighborhood for 100 years, but it went through racial change in the 1950s. When the first generation of African-Americans moved out or passed on, very few new households moved in. As a result, the neighborhood was more than 50% vacant buildings or vacant lots by the time [Jubilee Baltimore](#) went to work there in 2007. Today, there are no more vacant homes, and the last big vacant lot is getting building permits. The neighborhood now has about 700 households, of whom about 100 are living in long-term Section 8 apartments and 130 live in Jubilee's two LIHTC buildings for artists. About 50 low-income homeowners and about 150 low-income tenants live in privately-owned housing and, quite recently, the neighborhood has attracted about 50 market-rate homeowners.

When COVID-19 hit Greenmount West, many of the new residents got together, knocked on doors, and turned themselves into surprisingly efficient and personable social workers. They are bringing food to shut-ins, helping people with paperwork for unemployment, and keeping an eye on older neighbors whose regular support systems are no longer available.

Jubilee Baltimore President (and CoP member) **Charlie Duff**, says "Mixed-income neighborhoods are a nice idea, but they've generally been an untested theory. COVID-19 and the interaction it prompted between different types of neighbors shows us that Greenmount West is a successful experiment."

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Updates, Events + Announcements

National Community Stabilization Trust (NCST) and NeighborWorks America to Lead Middle Neighborhoods

We are pleased to formally announce that NCST is joining with NeighborWorks America as a partner in leading the Middle Neighborhoods Initiative, previously housed at The American Assembly at Columbia University. By bringing attention to middle neighborhoods, this initiative supports the continued health and vitality of these neighborhoods so that they can remain safe, affordable communities that offer a high quality of life and access to opportunity.

Going forward, NCST will coordinate national Middle Neighborhoods activities, including conducting research on neighborhood dynamics and developing policy proposals for supporting and investing in middle neighborhoods. NCST will also lead a communication effort focused on the importance of devoting resources to middle neighborhoods. The Middle Neighborhoods Steering Committee will continue to advise NCST on the direction of the initiative.

NeighborWorks America will support the Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice (CoP), which brings city officials and neighborhood-based organizations from across the nation together with policy makers, academics, financial institutions, and foundations interested in these efforts. The CoP convenes for peer-to-peer learning to share local best practices for supporting middle neighborhoods.

In the coming months, the Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice will redouble its efforts at recruitment, communication, and collaboration among practitioners and will also catalogue how communities are responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

Invest DSM Launches New Website and Programs for Des Moines Middle Neighborhoods

Invest DSM is a new 501(c)3 organization created by the City of Des Moines to implement its middle neighborhoods strategy. The strategy is launching in four neighborhoods to start, with initial funding of \$4 million annually from a recently passed sales tax increase. The goals of the strategy are to improve quality of life, retain and attract households, and change the trajectory of declining property values in order to maintain the long-term fiscal health of the city. Executive Director Amber Lynch launched the organization's first [website](#) this spring, which strives to be consumer-facing and promotes the neighborhoods as great places to live. It highlights once-in-a-lifetime incentives for updating and improving housing stock in ways that stabilize and improve housing values. In addition, brand statements for each neighborhood are front and center, and components of each neighborhood's plan are clickable throughout. The first program to launch is a [Block Challenge Grant](#) aimed at connecting neighbors in block-level beautification projects. Loan and grant incentives for home improvement are coming soon.



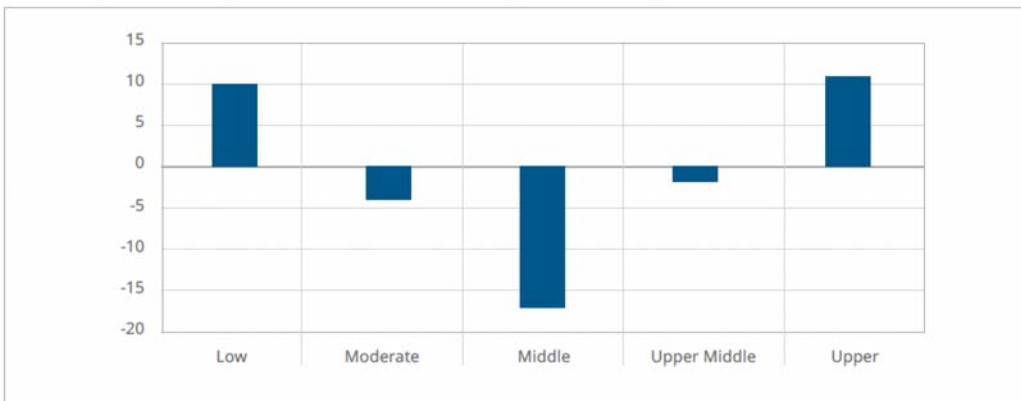
Be a part of a **great neighborhood** filled with opportunity



Abell Foundation Study Analyzes Loss of Middle Neighborhoods in Baltimore

[“Drilling Down in Baltimore’s Neighborhoods: Changes in racial/ethnic composition and income from 2000 to 2017”](#) by CoP member **Alan Mallach**, offers an overview of what has been happening in Baltimore’s neighborhoods since 2000. It covers the extent that neighborhoods have moved upward economically, moved downward, or stayed largely the same, and what that means in terms of population change, economic conditions, and housing markets. The report finds that the largest single factor driving change in Baltimore is the loss of working- and middle-class families, though this trend plays out very differently across the city’s racial divide. The study finds that out of 182 “potentially gentrifiable” tracts (neither upper-middle nor upper income in 2000), almost half of the predominately white tracts, but only 4 out of 110 of the largely black tracts, actually gentrified by 2017.

Figure 2: Change in Number of Baltimore Neighborhoods by Economic Level 2000 TO 2017



CoP Reports + Action Items

Research Focus Group: CoP members **Johnette Richardson** (NHS Baltimore), **Kamla Lewis** (City of Shaker Heights), **Tom Goddeeris** (Detroit Future City) and **Nedra Sims Fears** (Greater Chatham Initiative) participated in a focus group with researcher **Alan Mallach** to advise him on successful strategies for **strengthening African-American middle neighborhoods**. Mallach’s forthcoming paper on that topic will be presented as one of a two part webinar series this summer. **Researchers:** If your research on middle neighborhoods could be strengthened with input or feedback from practitioners, please [ask for assistance](#) in setting up connections or focus groups with our CoP members.

CoP Listserv Launched: MiddleNeighborhoodsCoP@googlegroups.com was launched this month, with the goal of providing direct access among CoP members to each other. All CoP members were auto-added to the google group, and all other newsletter mailing list members were invited. We’ve already had a number of posts on topics including policy initiatives, declining school enrollments, webinar announcements, and a vignette request. To join the listserv, email [Ann DiPetta](#).

Actions You Can Take to Grow and Support the CoP

1. **Join and participate in the Listserv**, MiddleNeighborhoodsCoP@googlegroups.com. This is the most direct way for CoP members to interact with each other. Share your questions and successes.
2. **Submit an article, news item, or resource idea** for the newsletter to [Marcia](#).
3. **Host a Middle Neighborhoods 101 webinar** for people in your organization or community to help them

learn about middle neighborhoods and launch a discussion on local opportunities. [We](#) will help you plan this and deliver the webinar with you.

4. **Submit an idea for a webinar or case study** topic to [Ann](#).
5. **Convene** (virtually until in-person meetings are advisable) with other CoP members in your region to discuss a particular issue, or to start creating a regional action agenda. [Marcia](#) can help you contact your peers and plan your convening.
6. We can also help you **convene a group** of CoP members by interest rather than geography. Past convenings have included city government representatives.
7. **Represent middle neighborhoods** in local policy discussions. [We'll](#) share some talking points.
8. **Propose and conduct a session on middle neighborhoods** for conferences and other convenings or groups you participate in. [We'll](#) help with the proposal, recruiting panelists, planning, etc.

Webinar Recordings

[Practitioner Perspective: COVID-19 Impact in Middle Neighborhoods](#), June 2020, presented by **Jason Powers**, Middle Neighborhoods Project Director, City of Cleveland, for the Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice. Panelists: **Mark Sissman**, President, Healthy Neighborhoods; **Jeffrey Verespej**, Executive Director, Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation; **Kevin Nowak**, Executive Director, CHN Housing Partners.

[Middle Neighborhoods 101](#) - June 2020, presented by Marcia Nedland for the Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice.

[After the COVID-19 Emergency: What's Next for Middle Neighborhoods? - Apr. 2020](#), presented by Alan Mallach for Center for Community Progress.

[Federal Policy Update in Response to COVID-19 - May 2020](#), presented by Rob Finn for Center for Community Progress.

In the News + Resources

[Stanford Study Finds Home Foreclosures Can Have Devastating Long-Term Impacts](#), Stanford News, June 22, 2020

[Are You In The American Middle Class? Find Out With Our Income Calculator](#), Pew Research Center.

[Where Banks Don't Lend](#), WBEZ Chicago, June 3, 2020.

[Research: Small Business Financial Outcomes During the Onset of COVID-19](#), JP Morgan Chase and Company, June 2020.

[Drilling Down in Baltimore's Neighborhoods: Changes in racial/ethnic composition and income from 2000 to 2017](#) by Alan Mallach for the Abell Foundation, April 2020.

[Building Community Data Capacity: Informing Innovative Strategies to Rebuild Demand in Greater Chatham](#), Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, March 17, 2020.



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