



Dundalk Renaissance Corporation 2017-2020 Strategic Plan Goals and Action Items Executive Summary

Background:

Dundalk Renaissance Corporation (DRC) was formed in April, 2001 by a steering committee of local stakeholders leading a broad-based, community planning process to re-imagine Dundalk's future in the face of decades of industrial job losses and population decline. We are a community-based community development corporation that works in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders including community residents, government, and the private sector to implement projects and seek investments that revitalize Dundalk. DRC's approach builds on our community's strengths, which include 43 miles of waterfront, affordable homeownership opportunities, a walkable historic district, and close proximity to Baltimore City, major highways and employers.

DRC is a certified Maryland Main Street and a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO). We create housing opportunities affordable to people with a wide range of incomes; organize our Main Street business district to boost business; promote our neighborhoods as great places to live and work; and engage community residents to promote pride, strengthen neighborhood associations, and improve our quality of life.

DRC believes in partnerships and collaboration, and that no one entity can do it all.

We acknowledge that there are many areas of work that are critical to our community's future which are beyond the scope of what our organization can pursue at this time. We welcome opportunities to partner and support others' endeavors to make Dundalk the best it can be.

The DRC updated this Strategic Plan in 2016-17, hiring Ken Gelula and Associates to formulate recommendations based upon feedback from community stakeholders, funders, DRC staff and Board. The final product reflects these recommendations and the deliberation of the Board and staff.

Our Vision:

We envision Dundalk's future as a sustainable community in which people live, work, and thrive. We attract and welcome diverse neighbors. Our parks, waterfront, schools, and commercial centers are vibrant assets that enrich our quality of life. Our housing includes a variety of choices, renovated and new, that are affordable to a wide range of people, contribute to healthy neighborhoods, and create opportunities to build wealth. We work in partnership with our commercial and industrial sectors to enhance community livability and environmental quality.

Our Mission:

We mobilize stakeholders to invest in greater Dundalk's neighborhoods, economy, and quality of life.

Our Values:

The Dundalk Renaissance Corporation is guided by the following values:

- **Neighborliness**: Communities thrive when individuals care deeply about their neighbors, take responsibility for themselves, and support each other in times of need and celebration as well as in resolving everyday challenges.
- **Innovation**: DRC welcomes innovation and investment that strengthens Dundalk's economic health and quality of life.
- **Heritage**: Dundalk has a rich historical legacy as a place and a people, including our walkable National Register Historic District, our role defending the nation in the War of 1812 and our demonstration of the dignity in hard work through a century of industry.
- **Diversity**: We embrace diversity and inclusiveness of all kinds. Our diversity strengthens Dundalk as a community.
- **Opportunity**: Dundalk should offer all its residents a chance to succeed through access to jobs and job training; safe, stable neighborhoods; a quality education; a clean and healthy environment; and home ownership that builds wealth."
- **Sustainability**: Creating a cleaner, greener, walkable, bikeable Dundalk benefits residents, neighborhoods, and the environment.
- **Engagement**: Our community is strongest when its residents and businesses invest time and resources as volunteers and stakeholders in the community's future. We advocate for the implementation of policies, programs, and projects that benefit Dundalk.
- **Unity**: While each neighborhood has a special identity and history, together they form a cohesive Dundalk community that is strongest when working together.

Goal 1: Housing:

Strengthen Dundalk's neighborhoods by increasing demand through quality home renovations that appeal to buyers of all incomes, increasing sale prices, and increasing the confidence and ability of current residents to reinvest in their homes, to build wealth through home ownership, and to age in place.

- Target specific neighborhoods and blocks within those neighborhoods in the use of grant and loan resources, organizing, and marketing capacity, following the Healthy Neighborhoods model, to most effectively boost home values, improve appearance of blocks, and increase homeowner confidence.
- The Marketing Director, Community Engagement Coordinator, and Housing Initiatives Manager will work as a team in focusing on target blocks and neighborhoods.
- Prioritize deteriorated houses that are for sale in target neighborhoods for support through DRC's Market Boost program, which assists small developers in purchasing and renovating housing for resale to owner-occupants. Continue increasing the volume of renovations for sale to increase comparables and appraised values in targeted neighborhoods.
- Maintain data to track housing sales, median incomes, and investment in the target areas.
- Apply other available resources to enhance target blocks such as curb appeal projects and greening initiatives.
- Initiate a program to provide services to assist low income homeowners (see Goal 5)

Goal 2: Marketing and Communications:

Market Dundalk's assets and neighborhoods to attract new residents, encourage home ownership, and increase economic diversity. Clearly communicate Dundalk Renaissance Corporation's work as an organization through multiple platforms to increase stakeholder understanding, engagement, and support.

- Continue to promote the successful Unexpected Dundalk branding campaign.
- Analyze homebuyer data to better understand the market that is attracted to Dundalk and to fine-tune DRC's marketing message.
- Focus the communications plan on both the broader rebranding of Dundalk, and on promoting the specific target neighborhoods. Recruit residents of these neighborhoods to become ambassadors for prospective homebuyers to contact.
- With increasing employment being created near Dundalk, the communication plan will include an effort to work with nearby businesses to promote the Dundalk community.
- Along with other organizations, advocate for the creation of a Live Near Your Work program in Baltimore County, similar to the program offered in Baltimore City.
- Use the communications plan to clarify and reinforce public understanding of DRC's mission.

Goal 3: Main Street and Economic Development:

Support the growth and expansion of Main Street businesses, encourage improvements to commercial properties and improve the appearance of the Main Street, attract a wider range of retail choices, and strengthen the connection between the Main Street and surrounding neighborhoods.

- Continue successful grassroots projects such as Makers Market and Pop Up retail stores to help grow new Main Street businesses.
- Continue to produce community-building events and to use partnerships such as the Alternative Sentencing Program to improve the appearance of the Main Street and attract shoppers.

- Complete the renovation of DRC's Center Place office building to create space for business start-ups and support building resident capacity through partnerships to provide financial literacy classes, other supports.
- Develop a Town Center neighborhood strategy that merges commercial and nearby neighborhood interests on such issues as public safety, financial literacy, and neighborhood promotion.
- Recruit a group of commercial real estate professionals and economic development/small business professionals from the County and State to evaluate options for vacant space in Town Center. A realistic plan for follow up will be developed.

Goal 4: Community Engagement:

Raise the profile of DRC's work and expand opportunities for impact through strategic partnerships and increased engagement with stakeholders that control or have potential to bring resources to Dundalk.

- Continue to communicate regularly with community stakeholders, soliciting input about DRC activities and community issues related to revitalization goals.
- Make partnership and collaboration with the emerging Turner's Station community development organization a priority.
- The executive director and staff should meet regularly with the County Planning Department's regional staff and with staff from the State Department of Housing and Community Development to discuss DRC progress/plans, seeking their ideas and support.
- The executive director should meet regularly with CEO's from other East Baltimore City/Baltimore County community development organizations and businesses, such as Trade Point, to discuss regional trends and opportunities.
- Make resource development an important aspect of community engagement through meetings with local, regional and national funders and pursuing new opportunities either alone or in collaboration with partner organizations.
- Develop partnerships with service provider organizations that can bring additional services to Dundalk (such as financial literacy).

Goal 5: (new) –Assisting Low-Income Older Adult Homeowners

Assist low-income older adults to age in place to improve their quality of life and proactively manage the housing stock and demographic transition of targeted neighborhoods in Dundalk.

- Launch and further develop a home repair program through partnership with Rebuilding Together to provide small grants to increase safety and comfort for low income older adult home owners.
- Explore partnerships with other non-profits and entities engaged in assisting older adults living in their own homes.
- Explore creation of a volunteer component of the program.
- Collect data on all who are served to assess next steps in the development of the program.
- Collect further data on population and home sales in target neighborhoods to better understand the volume and nature of the needs of older adult residents.