

DUNDALK RENAISSANCE

2021-2023 Strategic Plan

Background:

Dundalk Renaissance Corporation (DR) 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 community residents, government, and the private sector to implement projects and seek investments that revitalize Dundalk. DR's approach builds on our community's strengths, which include 43 miles of waterfront, affordable homeownership opportunities, a walkable National Register historic district, and close proximity to Baltimore City, major highways, and employers.

DR is a certified Maryland Main Street and a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO). We provide housing and financial counseling and seek to strengthen our workforce. We create housing opportunities affordable to people with a wide range of incomes; organize our Main Street district to boost local businesses; 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.

DR 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.

Dundalk Renaissance updated this Strategic Plan in 2019-20 based upon feedback from community stakeholders, survey responses from over 150 people, funders, staff and Board. Additional deliberations in 2020-21 were undertaken to reflect further on 1) how the COVID-19 pandemic may affect our goals and objectives and 2) how we can more explicitly address seeking racial equity in our work. This document maps out our path forward as of its adoption on March 11, 2021.

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:

We are guided by the following values:

- **Neighborhoodliness:** 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:** We welcome innovation and investment that strengthens Dundalk's economic health and quality of life.
- **History:** We seek to learn from and honor greater Dundalk's past, including our defense of the nation in the War of 1812; how our community was developed and how it has changed over time; and our residents' varied experiences through more than a century of industry.
- **Diversity:** We embrace diversity and inclusiveness of all kinds, including diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, age, income, sexual identity, and ability. 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.



Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We are committed to advancing equity in our work to improve Dundalk, and in how we pursue that work and run our organization. We know this will be an ongoing process to listen, reflect, and modify our approach.

We welcome all feedback.



External Goals:

We believe that we must act to help fight systemic racism as it impacts residents, businesses, and neighborhoods in greater Dundalk. We seek to embrace diversity and inclusion of all kinds. We will:

- A. Support and grow Dundalk Cares, a multiracial community-based initiative and partnership that seeks to promote understanding and address equity issues affecting the Dundalk community through multiple activities and outreach.
- B. Address the racial wealth gap as part of our work to increase home ownership and build wealth in Dundalk through housing development, financial counseling, affirmative marketing, and policy advocacy.
- C. Promote and support the growth of businesses owned by people of color, LGBTQ, and people of other diverse backgrounds in the Historic Dundalk Town Center (HDTTC).
- D. Work to ensure diverse participation in our events and community engagement programs using a broader range of marketing and outreach strategies and ensure that beneficiaries of our grant and loan programs are also diverse in accordance with program eligibility.
- E. Use data to regularly assess community needs, program design, and program implementation with diversity in mind. Monitor and address disparities between event participants and program beneficiaries.

Internal Goals:

We are committed to reflecting the communities we serve, to reorienting and refining our work to seek more equitable outcomes, and to regularly assessing our internal practices and investing in our ongoing growth.

- A. Strengthen how our programs address economic and racial equity in their design, partnership development, data gathering and analysis, and transparent reporting on outcomes and beneficiaries.
- B. Improve how we manage and govern our organization to promote equity and transparency. We will continue to show pictures of our leadership to foster understanding and encourage people from marginalized communities to feel safe participating with Dundalk Renaissance. We will continue to advertise for our board positions and explicitly prioritize our desire for diverse leadership. We will identify and establish specific improvements in board and staff procedures that encourage diversity of thought and the voicing of diverse experiences.
- C. We are committed to equal employment opportunity.
- D. We will assess our progress on diversity equity and inclusion annually through staff program reports, and staff and board self-assessment. We will publicly share our progress on our goals annually.
- E. We will pursue ongoing board and staff development at least annually to support continued growth and strengthening of our organization's efforts regarding these issues.

Program Goal 1: Housing and Neighborhoods

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. Explore creation of quality rental housing and lease-to-purchase opportunities that enhance the range of choices and increase neighborhood stability.

Objectives:

- a) Following the Healthy Neighborhoods Model, target most of our limited grant and loan resources to specific neighborhoods and blocks to maximize our impact on home values, improving neighborhood appearance, and increasing homeowner confidence.
- b) Continue increasing the volume of renovations for sale to increase real estate comparables, appraised values, and opportunities to build wealth in targeted neighborhoods, through direct acquisition-rehabs and partnerships with small developers.
- c) Partner with the Turner Station Conservation Teams, Baltimore County, and Eastside CDC to implement a Housing Strategy for the historically African American community of Turner Station that addresses the racial wealth gap by strengthening the market for homeownership and creating more home renovations and infill new construction units for sale to owner occupants, preparing current residents for homeownership, and supporting existing homeowners to improve their properties and age in place.
- d) Seek deeper levels of support from multiple funding sources for property development to broaden our impact and increase organization sustainability, including: renovations for resale to owner-occupants, a lease-to-purchase program, and high-quality rental housing that helps meet the needs of our workforce, enhances family stability, and helps reduce vacancies and stabilize target blocks.
- e) Seek additional resources to continue and/or expand home renovation programs for current homeowners to encourage them to stay and reinvest; to address the curb appeal and neighborhood impacts of owner-occupied and rental properties; and to engage residents in projects that enhance community gateways.
- f) Continue assisting low-income older adults to age in place, improve their quality of life, and proactively manage the housing stock and demographic transition in targeted neighborhoods through our homeowner repair program, participating in Baltimore County Department of Aging's BCAUSE program, and growing workforce development opportunities through partnerships with the Community College of Baltimore County and local contractors.
- g) Pursue partnerships with other nonprofits, government, and private entities to enhance housing programs through connecting clients with other services, tracking health outcomes, engaging volunteers, linking programs to workforce development, engaging landlords, and other strategies.
- h) Work with multiple partners within Dundalk and across the County to pursue policy reforms at the State and County levels such as how Baltimore County addresses vacant housing, including the creation of new tools like receivership, expanded use of rental registration, and pilot initiatives.
- i) Maintain data to track housing sales, median incomes, demographics including race, ethnicity, age, ability, tenure, and investment in target areas and across Dundalk compared to other areas.

Program Goal 2: Financial Counseling

Strengthen households and neighborhoods by increasing the financial well-being of residents and prospective homebuyers, supporting renters and homeowners to remain in their homes, and working to increase their access to resources that can improve quality of life, expand economic opportunity, and build wealth.

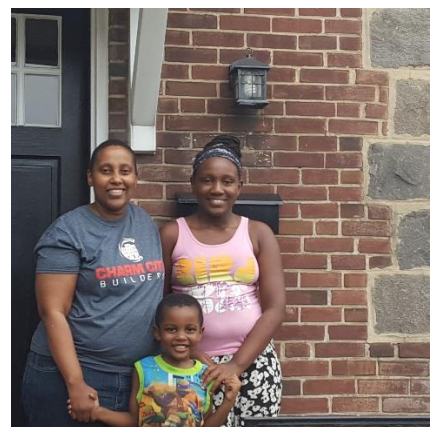
- a) Provide financial education and counseling to residents to reduce occurrences of evictions and foreclosures, and encourage short and long-term financial planning to enhance family and neighborhood stability.
- b) Provide purchase counseling to support prospective and recent home buyers in preparing to buy a home and stay on track and in good standing as a new homeowner. Connect buyers with neighborhood organizations and information to support stronger neighborhoods.
- c) Manage and pre-qualify home buyers for available purchase incentives that support economic diversity in our neighborhoods.
- d) Continue to pursue certification from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a counseling agency and HUD funding to support housing counseling and to offer SELP loans to prospective home buyers.
- e) Support older adults and their caregivers in planning for aging in place and connect them with other financial, health, and estate planning resources.
- f) Serve as an intake or full tax preparation site for the MD CASH Campaign to support low-income residents in obtaining all available tax benefits to increase their financial well-being.
- g) Provide counseling support for tenants of DRC lease-to-purchase properties to prepare them for future home ownership.
- h) Address the racial wealth gap by ensuring that residents in the historically African American community of Turner Station, and current and prospective residents of color throughout greater Dundalk, are made aware of, and choose to access our financial counseling and other services.
- i) Partner with other nonprofit, government, and private entities to provide financial counseling services and increase resources access for residents that can improve their quality of life and increase their economic choices.



Program Goal 3: Marketing and Communications

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

- a) Continue to promote Dundalk to a broad geographic area as a great place to live, work, and play on multiple platforms. Specifically emphasize our waterfront assets, focus neighborhoods, and the Historic Dundalk Town Center (HDTC). Continue to expand our reach through Instagram and TikTok.
- b) Promote the availability of purchase incentives with homebuyer events and neighborhood tours, including the availability of SELP loans for lower income home buyers whether managed by us or by our partners.
- c) Promote HDTC businesses and help build the case for a Dundalk Arts and Entertainment District designation to increase economic activity and attract and retain new demographics of shoppers, entrepreneurs, artists, and residents to our community.
- d) Deepen our capacity to promote our events and programs in multiple languages to reach emerging populations including Latinx through multilingual signage, use of translation services, staff development, hiring, or partnering with multilingual organizations. Promote within a variety of faith-based institutions and lean on existing partnerships with disability advocates to expand diversity of reach and attendance.
- e) Address the racial wealth gap by promoting the historically African American community of Turner Station as one of our focus neighborhoods, and by affirmatively marketing all our housing opportunities throughout greater Dundalk and our other services to current and prospective residents of color.
- f) Analyze homebuyer data to better understand the market that is attracted to Dundalk and to fine-tune DRC's marketing messages. Continue to seek interest beyond Southeast Baltimore County. Extend our reach with emerging target markets such as Latinx/Hispanic, Muslim, Bhutanese, other populations. Track program participation by current address, race, ethnicity, and income, and make adjustments to diversify our participants. Monitor and address disparities between marketing event participants and home buyer grant beneficiaries.
- g) Focus the communications plan on both the broader rebranding of Dundalk, and on promoting the specific target neighborhoods and HDTC. Recruit residents of these neighborhoods and HDTC businesses to become ambassadors for prospective homebuyers and businesses to contact.
- h) Along with other organizations, advocate for the creation of a Live Near Your Work program in Baltimore County, partnering with Tradepoint Atlantic tenants and other businesses and stakeholders.
- i) Promote, clarify, and reinforce public understanding of DRC's mission, programs, and accomplishments. Improve marketing of all our programs to broaden engagement through expanded distribution of Spanish materials, use of translation services, and reaching people from various faith-based institutions, people who work unconventional schedules, are home-bound or do not have internet access, are parents without childcare, are youth, and/or are otherwise not currently engaged.



Program Goal 4: Main Street and Economic Development

Support the growth and expansion of Main Street businesses, pursue a Dundalk Arts and Entertainment District designation, 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. Create employment opportunities.

- a) Support the growth of current and new businesses in the Historic Dundalk Town Center (HDTCC) with technical assistance and resources as available for marketing, façade improvements, COVID relief grants. Take affirmative steps to include businesses owned by people or color, LGBTQ, and people of other diverse backgrounds.
- b) Coordinate HDTCC businesses, nonprofit, and adjacent neighborhood stakeholders to meet regularly to advocate and implement improvement strategies.
- c) Produce pop-up shops and pursue other strategies to market vacant retail spaces and help grow new businesses.
- d) Engage a diverse group of stakeholders to pursue a Dundalk Arts and Entertainment District designation that includes the HDTCC to increase economic activity and attract and retain new demographics of shoppers, entrepreneurs, artists, and residents to our community. Continue to expand public art and cultural programming to enhance the HDTCC and support the A&E designation.
- e) Promote the Forge as a shared workspace, small business incubator, and community resource space to meet employment, business development, financial counseling, and community capacity-building needs.
- f) Foster opportunities for the existing Dundalk workforce by developing partnerships to train individuals to work on our various renovation programs, in office environments, and to learn translatable skills.
- g) Coordinate events and volunteers to drive shoppers to HDTCC Businesses, grow new businesses, build community and connection to place, clean up and improve the Main Street, and support The Forge. Ensure event participants are diverse.
- h) Help guide the redevelopment of 16 Center Place and other vacant properties to support the sustainability of the Historic Dundalk Town Center and surrounding neighborhoods.



Program Goal 5: Community Engagement

Engage stakeholders in constructive dialogue on facing community challenges and identifying shared aspirations and solutions to strengthen our overall sense of collective efficacy. Build capacity of neighborhood organizations. 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.

- a) Deepen our work on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the community through our Dundalk Cares initiative, continuing to increase participation in discussions on race, expanding number of "All Are Welcome Here" yard signs, installation of little free libraries, and other projects; engaging neighborhood organizations and other entities in potential partnerships; and setting specific annual goals with multiracial steering committee for implementation.
- b) Where it is constructive to do so, serve as a convenor and/or participate in convenings around shared challenges to community quality of life and revitalization.
- c) Share information with the public and our partners to foster civic engagement, organize people to address potential threats to community well-being, and encourage participation in new opportunities to bring resources and growth to the community.
- d) Support the growth and sustainability of neighborhood organizations in our focus neighborhoods and cultivate their ability to engage diverse residents, address challenges, and build community.
- e) Seek funding to hire a community organizer to better support our community engagement work.
- f) Continue to develop partnerships with service provider organizations that can bring additional resources to Dundalk and pursue more integrated approaches to addressing substance abuse, homelessness, housing, food insecurity, health care, employment, the digital divide, and environmental quality, among other issues.
- g) Make partnership and collaboration with organizations in the Dundalk Avenue corridor a priority as we seek to address housing, code enforcement, infrastructure, trash, dumping, beautification, other issues.
- h) Participate in the Maryland Port Administration's Harbor Options Team, monitor Port activities and their impacts on community quality of life and environment, and provide feedback as needed.
- i) Continue to communicate regularly with community stakeholders, soliciting input about DRC activities and community issues related to our revitalization goals. These communications include our e-newsletter and social media, our Annual Meeting, and a wide range of smaller group and individual meetings throughout the year. Continue to make our annual financial statements and report on our activities and accomplishments available on our website.

