A FUNDER’S APPROACH:
Middle Neighborhoods
Funder Background

• Group of Baltimore-based family foundations
• Dual mission: enhancing Jewish life and supporting a vibrant Baltimore
• 4th and 5th generation family members at board table
• Founders’ view that middle class is backbone of American society and often overlooked by philanthropy
• Viewpoint drives the Funds to focus on middle class and provide support where it can make a difference
Background on Funds’ Middle Neighborhoods Work

• In 2010, in addition to our Jewish work, we re-focused Baltimore efforts on strengthening neighborhoods with middle class residents

• Funds’ Operating Principles for working with neighborhoods:
  • Identify quality organizations run by talented leaders
  • Make commitments to people and relationships over time
  • Our Jewish values inform much of the work
    • Micah 6:8 “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly” inspires our Funds’ Values Statement
    • We look for partners who embrace these actions in their outlook and their track record
  • Trust organizations to know what they need to accomplish goals and provide them general operating support
American Assembly’s 2016 *On the Edge: America’s Middle Neighborhoods*

- Documents need to better understand, advocate for, and stabilize these essential economic and civic assets

- Nearly half of U.S. urban population lives in neighborhoods like the ones the Funds work in: “on the edge between growth and decline”
  - Yet there is “no consensus about what factors tip them in one direction or the other”

- There is clarity that when these neighborhoods decline, “the heaviest toll falls on the middle class”

- The Assembly is focusing on building a national movement to bring awareness to the significance of these assets

- Importantly, the Assembly gives these neighborhoods a name: “middle neighborhoods”
Determining Neighborhoods to Work In

- Baltimore is a network of neighborhoods, each with its own character, identity, and history.
- Some neighborhoods are healthier than others:
  - Have strong schools
  - Active real estate markets
  - Vibrant local business
  - Few safety issues
- Some neighborhoods are near tipping points:
  - Diverse socioeconomic and demographic profiles
  - Good housing stock
  - Underperforming schools and businesses
  - Rising safety concerns
- Some neighborhoods have declined to a point where the Funds’ resources might not make any impact.
- Collaboration with other funders:
  - Healthy Neighborhoods, Inc.
  - Goldseker Foundation
  - Baltimore Community Foundation
Funds’ Assumptions and Strategic Direction

• Baltimore City needs many healthy neighborhoods and thriving middle class to function

• HNI helped us identify three city neighborhoods that could benefit from additional support:
  • Hamilton/Lauraville and Belair-Edison in Northeast Baltimore
  • Patterson Park in Southeast Baltimore

• These “target neighborhoods” have solid assets and middle class populations:
  • Strong housing stock
  • Good network of schools
  • Local organizations/institutions focused on quality of life in the neighborhoods

• Gathering spaces/places where community is nurtured is part of Funds’ commitment to healthy civic life
Investments in Northeast and Southeast Baltimore

• Provide funding to target neighborhoods and engage with other funding partners with goal of maintaining and strengthening neighborhoods

• Each target neighborhood requires different investments reflective of needs and character

• Our support includes:
  • Community development and Main Street efforts
  • Sustaining school networks through focus enrollment, school quality and family engagement
  • Provide in/out of school time programming to schools from citywide non-profits
  • Green spaces
  • Cultural organizations
  • Libraries
Investments in Northeast and Southeast Baltimore

• Through our relationship building with leaders in target neighborhoods, we found a significant gap:
  • Organizations were familiar with each other, but did not know each other well and rarely gathered

• Realized there was a role for the Funds beyond grant making

• Began informal yet intentional **Roundtable Lunches** in Northeast and Southeast Baltimore that:
  • Provide opportunities for nonprofit leaders to know each other and build relationships
  • Encourage deeper connections
  • Strengthen network of target neighborhood nonprofits and their relationships
  • Collaboration on shared issues is an outgrowth
  • Simple low-cost concept with a deep and lasting impact
  • Outcomes of lunches include homebuyer tours and youth summer jobs collaboration
$4.1 million since 2010

36 organizations

81 general operating support grants
Southeast Baltimore
Evaluation of the Strategy / Our Impact

• In 2015, we engaged University of Maryland Social Work School to evaluate our work retrospectively

• Goals:
  • demonstrate what has been accomplished
  • articulate how the lessons could inform current and future work through actionable recommendations

• Research conducted from January 2016 through August 2017
  • 42 surveys and 47 in-person interviews across 23 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Funds’ target neighborhoods
  • Collected quantitative and qualitative data related to organizational capacity and CBOs’ assessment of Funds’ impact
Evaluation Findings

• Organizational Capacity Impact
  • Flexibility
  • Staff Recruitment
  • Staff Development
  • Fundraising/Legitimacy
  • Networking
  • Marketing and Influence

• Community Impact
  • Realistic Expectations
  • Civic Capacity
    • Social and Political Capital
Evaluation Recommendations

• Provide general operating support grants to nonprofits as it is the most difficult and essential money to raise
  • We can bolster financial stability through multi-year grants

• Enhance Roundtable Lunches to leverage relationships and collaboration among organizations
  • Neutral setting presents an ideal opportunity to provide desired professional development

• Maintain and strengthen personal touch with CBO professionals

• Provide technical assistance to CBOs that feel they lack particular expertise

• Help facilitate advocacy by and for CBOs around topic(s) of mutual importance to them

• Measure impact of individual CBOs and the larger grantee network using several evaluative tools