REVISITING REVITALIZATION

Community Health Lessons from
Baltimore's Vacants to Value Initiative

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Neighborhoods undergo constant change when local governments, philanthropists, and community organizations invest resources to mitigate declining trajectories. The success of such efforts, however, is often measured in economic terms, such as through property value increases, with less attention to the health of residents who remain in the community.

In this project, we shifted those priorities by examining a range of community health impacts from a strategic revitalization effort in Baltimore City: the Vacants to Value (V2V) initiative. While local studies have assessed some dimensions of the V2V initiative, including process and policy effectiveness, the initiative's community health impacts have yet to be explored. To address this gap, we developed three case examples of V2V in different neighborhoods (see Annex of report). We focus on understanding communities' expectations, engagement with V2V, and how community health could be better achieved. This report offers a preliminary scan of V2V's community health impacts, to set the stage for a future Health Impact Assessment (HIA), a tool commonly used by planners and other decision-makers to evaluate potential positive and negative public health impacts of a plan, policy, or initiative.

Vacants to Value and Neighborhood Revitalization in Baltimore City, MD

In 2010, the City of Baltimore launched an ambitious initiative to address its mounting inventory of vacant and abandoned homes. V2V involved a portfolio of complementary strategies, such as streamlined code enforcement and disposition of city-owned properties, which were tailored to the city's diverse neighborhood conditions and markets. Acknowledging limitations in resources to address every vacant property, the city partnered with non-profit and for-profit developers to identify neighborhoods with market potential and formally designated them Community Development Clusters (CD Clusters).

Little previous research exists on V2V, as it is a relatively new program. Prior evaluations largely focus on the initiative's procedures, how resources were spent, and the economic impacts. To our knowledge, no study has examined how V2V has or could impact community health in designated neighborhoods. Our preliminary study uncovers the interplay of the neighborhoods' physical and social dimensions. Building on these findings, we present key ideas to strengthen V2V's process in order to advance community health in more place- and health-conscious ways.

Methods and Approach

Our research employed an exploratory case study approach, including a literature review and stakeholder interviews, to inform a cross-case analysis of three CD Clusters, each of which represented a distinct stage of the V2V revitalization process: early, middle, and late stages. With the guidance of Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development representatives, we completed site visits and stakeholder interviews with community residents, neighborhood organizations, developers, and government officials (n=25) impacted by or involved with V2V implementation in the following areas: the Garrison and Oakley CD Clusters of Park Heights in northwest Baltimore, the Eager Street Commons CD Cluster of Milton-Montford in east Baltimore, and the Greenmount West CD Cluster in central Baltimore. Community members reviewed our findings and conducted a review of each respective case example.

Findings, Insights, and Observations

Themes from stakeholder interviews indicate the ways in which each neighborhood's physical and social dimensions influenced respective CD Clusters' overall V2V experience and the extent to which V2V strategies can stabilize (or destabilize) community health.

Specifically, features related to a community's physical dimensions – namely neighborhood footprint and degree of vacancy, urban form, and neighborhood master planning – affected V2V's program design and management process.

Features related to a community's social dimensions – including social infrastructures, community readiness, and community influence – affected the quality of V2V implementation and the extent to which community members had opportunities to respond and adapt to neighborhood changes.

Overall, the dynamic interplay between changes in neighborhoods' physical and social dimensions can contribute to community health effects in social capital (e.g., social exclusion, isolation, reciprocity) and in mental health outcomes (e.g., distress, hopefulness, frustration, trust).

Future Health Impact Assessment of V2V and Recommendations for Moving Forward

In light of our research and preliminary findings, we believe that a future HIA should be undertaken to establish stronger relationships between V2V's portfolio of activities and community health in designated V2V neighborhoods. We provide a framework for a future comprehensive HIA and identify key ideas that may foster a more health-centered process and implementation of V2V.

In the future, the Department of Housing and Community Development, in partnership with public health experts and community leaders, could seek additional public funding and philanthropic resources to identify, implement, and evaluate:

1. Mechanisms that build capacity and facilitate pre-revitalization assessments of neighborhoods' existing social infrastructure, level of community readiness, and degree of community influence in development efforts.

2. Mechanisms that strengthen neighborhood social form, such as the establishment of a "backbone" organization or V2V advisory groups.

3. Strategies to align neighborhood master plans with V2V plans that build on community members' existing visions and goals related to revitalization and redevelopment.

4. Opportunities to build capacity in monitoring and evaluation of the revitalization process and community health impacts.

5. Additional avenues to build partnerships with the city's public health department and community organizations, to ensure equitable development that advances social capital and mental health outcomes.

This report includes five sections:

- **Section 1** provides a brief literature review on the relationships between vacant properties and community health, summarizes prior studies of the V2V initiative, and explains the usefulness of Health Impact Assessments in the context of neighborhood revitalization efforts.

- **Section 2** describes the methodology of this study.

- Based on our cross-case analysis, **Section 3** compares findings regarding V2V's community health impacts across three communities.

- **Section 4** proposes a framework for a future Health Impact Assessment of new Community Development Clusters that V2V decision-makers can use before the start of revitalization efforts.

- **Section 5** offers recommendations to local government for strengthening V2V's revitalization process by advancing community health in more place- and health-conscious ways in the future.

Finally, the **Annex** of the report includes a deep dive into community health lessons from Baltimore City's V2V initiative in three different neighborhoods:

1. Restoring the Social Fabric: Challenges and Opportunities to Strengthen the Revitalization Process and Community Health in Park Heights, Baltimore

2. Community-Driven Revitalization: Building on Historic Strengths to Restore and Preserve Community Health in Eager Street Commons, Baltimore

3. "Coalition of the Willing:" Advancing Community Health Through Collaborative Revitalization in Greenmount West, Baltimore

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Vacant Properties and Community Health

Distressed properties, including occupied substandard homes, vacant lots, foreclosed homes, and abandoned buildings, can individually and cumulatively impact the health of occupants and nearby residents in the broader community. Numerous studies document that vacant properties, which are often in discernible disrepair, can generate conditions that impede residents' health and overall neighborhood vitality. Below is a sample of prior research documenting the relationships between urban blight, vacant properties, and community health.

- Housing code violations have been associated with residents' health outcomes, through increased exposure to allergens and lead that contribute to increased incidence of **asthma** and **development deficits**, respectively.[1,2]

- A national study of vacant housing and neighborhood health disparities also reported that vacancy rates were associated with **coronary heart disease** and poor **mental health** outcomes among adults.[3]

- Social scientists and public health experts have conceptualized vacant properties as a neighborhood-level risk factor that can diminish nearby property values, engender criminal activity, and contribute to **premature mortality** caused by cancer, diabetes, and homicide.[4-6]

- A study in Philadelphia reported connections between the number of vacant properties and reported aggravated assaults, specifically a greater likelihood of **violence** as the number of vacant properties increased.[7] Threats to one's safety can then contribute to a growing **sense of fear** and discourage social relationships among community members.[8]

- A qualitative study of residents in New York indicated that a declining neighborhood led to increased **isolation** and interfered with community members' ability to organize and form relationships.[9]

Drawing from this line of work,[10] scholars have hypothesized that improvements to the built environment could improve quality of life and revitalize neighborhoods by removing dangerous buildings or improving vacant lots. Thus, local governments across the country, including those in Richmond, VA; Philadelphia, PA; and Buffalo, NY, have invested in strategic redevelopment and revitalization efforts in recent decades. For example, Richmond's Neighborhoods in Bloom program, launched in 1998, leveraged the federal Community Development Block Grant Program and other funds to focus on a small number of blocks in seven neighborhoods, to ultimately achieve a critical mass that could stimulate self-sustaining private market activity.[11] A few years later, the City of Philadelphia established the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative to generate $250 million from the sale of general obligation bonds that would, over five years, finance the demolition of abandoned buildings, the acquisition of properties, the relocation of residents, and the preparation of large land parcels for the development of market-rate and affordable housing. Additional federal, state, and local funds supplemented the bond sale, to support housing construction and renovations.[12] In 2008, The City of Buffalo adopted a demolition plan, known as the 5 x 5 Demolition Initiative, to remove five-thousand vacant homes in five years.[13] Despite these efforts, the process of neighborhood revitalization and its effect on community health remain largely unknown.

The field of community health in public health practice is ever-evolving, growing, and often an important but overlooked dimension of neighborhood revitalization. This report follows the definition of community as (i) "a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings."[14,15] Health in this context encompasses a community's expectations and experiences, including how community health is enacted through methods, measures, processes, and outcomes.[14]

Connections between the built environment[a] and health outcomes at the individual level are well documented, as prior studies show the importance of safe and affordable housing for well-being, walkable streets and communities to promote physical activity, and the availability of healthy food destinations to support nutritious diets.[16-18] Epidemiological studies that report associations between income inequality and mortality risk, social integration and lower mortality risk, as well as the protective effects of social ties against depression also demonstrate the relationship between social environments[b] and health outcomes.[19,20] Nonetheless, the interplay between the process of neighborhood change and its impact on community health are poorly understood.

Examination of the links between strategic neighborhood revitalization and community health is especially important for mitigating health disparities.

> **For whom is revitalization vital, and how does the revitalization process impact health and vitality across communities?**

As noted, most research examining strategic, targeted approaches to code enforcement and neighborhood revitalization has focused on the economic impacts (increases in adjacent property value) and public safety (decreases in crime). Missing from this body of research are the potential impacts of such programs on community health.

Our project helps address this knowledge gap by exploring the community health impacts – and the processes by which these impacts are achieved – of Baltimore's Vacants to Value, an initiative that has gained national attention for its creative, collaborative approach to reclaiming vacant properties.

1.2   Vacants to Value (V2V) in Baltimore City, MD

In 2010, the City of Baltimore launched the Vacants to Value (V2V) initiative, a multipronged strategy designed to transform vacant properties into productive use. Overseen by the Department of Housing and Community Development, V2V was part of the city's larger push to attract ten-thousand new families by 2020. The V2V approach to urban redevelopment relies on seven core strategies to create an environment in which the city works with nonprofit and for-profit developers to rehabilitate vacant homes and to reclaim other vacant properties. This approach breaks from an earlier generation of redevelopment strategies in which cities designated large tracts of land and then requested proposals from large developers. Instead, the city now relies on underlying market fundamentals to drive development and works hand-in-hand with developers in neighborhoods with active or potential demand.

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[a] Defined by the physical environment made by people for people, including buildings, transportation systems, and open spaces.

[b] Defined by social relationships and socioeconomic and sociocultural environments.

The specific V2V strategies[21] include:

1. **Streamline the Disposition of City-Owned Properties**

   The city is making it easier for developers and other qualified buyers to purchase city-owned properties by consolidating acquisition, management, and disposition, and by advertising properties on a new website.

2. **Streamline Code Enforcement**

   The city is implementing a more proactive code enforcement process to address vacant properties and prevent relatively strong-market neighborhoods from undermining community progress (**Figure 1.1**).

3. **Facilitate Investment in Emerging Markets**

   For neighborhoods with weak housing markets but proximity to strong assets, the city is working with developers to demolish vacant homes, acquire properties, and leverage federal and state resources.

4. **Target Home-buying Incentives**

   V2V helps prospective home buyers in Baltimore access various incentives, through federal, state, local, and employer-based programs, to purchase previously vacant homes.

5. **Support Large-Scale Redevelopment in Distressed Areas**

   For neighborhoods with widespread abandonment, the city continues to support larger-area redevelopment projects.

6. **Demolish and Maintain Severely Distressed Blocks**

   For buildings that cannot be restored, the city uses local, federal, and state funds to selectively demolish blocks with severely distressed homes.

7. **Provide Concentrated Green, Healthy, and Sustainable Home and Neighborhood Improvements**

   The city also provides assistance, typically grants, to low-income homeowners to improve their homes, including energy conservation and weatherization assistance, lead-hazard reduction, and home repair.

Figure 1.1 Streamlined code enforcement and demolition process.[c]
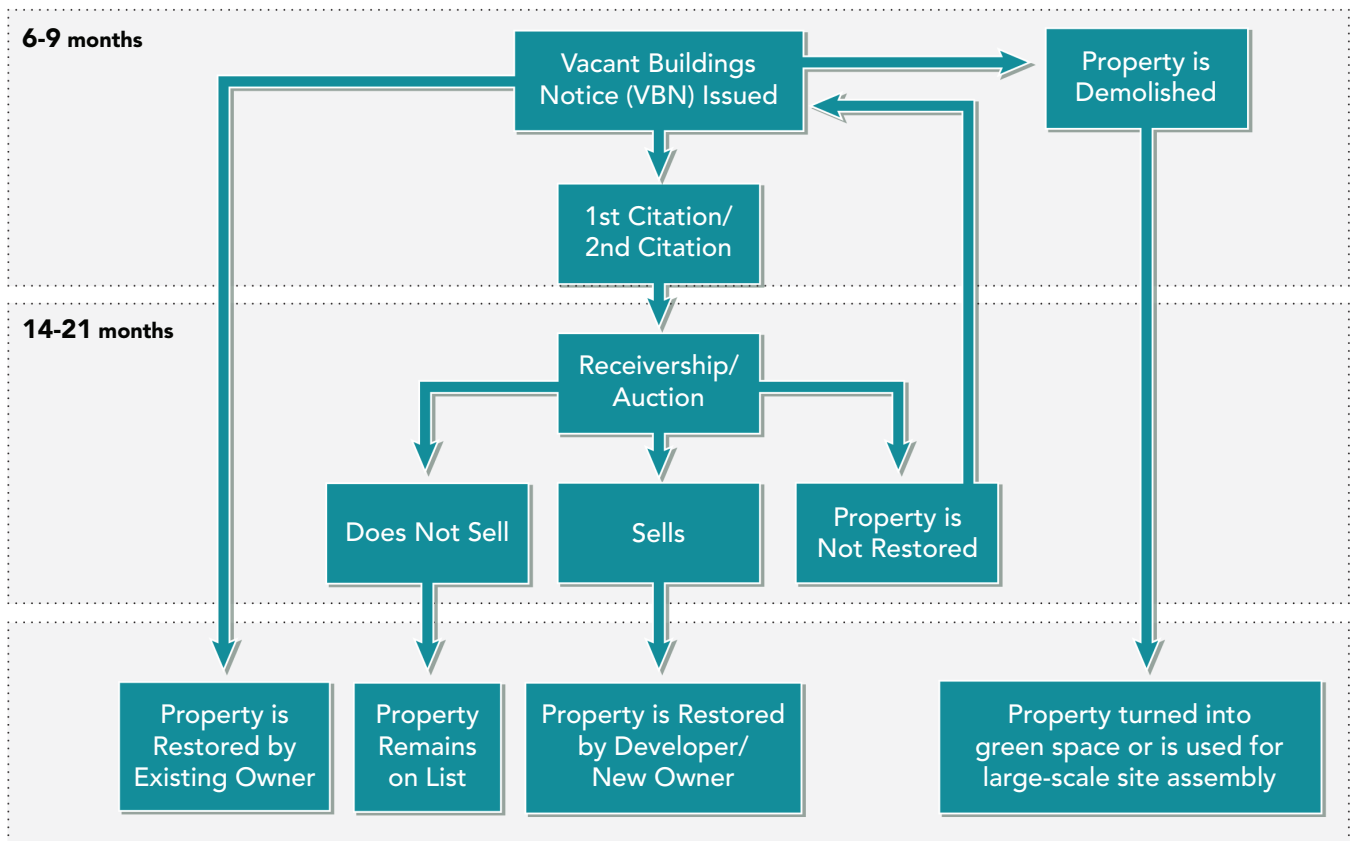
To operationalize the seven strategies, V2V focused on two designations:

Streamlined Code Enforcement Neighborhoods (SCENs) have relatively few vacant properties scattered throughout the neighborhood. The market conditions are considered strong enough that a focus on code enforcement is sufficient to motivate owners to rehabilitate or sell vacant properties. In these middle-market neighborhoods, the city sends $900 vacant building notice (VBN) citations to owners to encourage them to repair or sell the home. When VBNs do not work, the city can use its power of receivership to take control of the property and sell it to a new owner (**Figure 1.2**).[22]

Community Development Clusters (CD Clusters) are neighborhoods that have many concentrated vacant properties. However, CD Clusters have some market potential, measured by developer

Figure 1.2
Streamlined Code Enforcement Neighborhoods (SCENs) in Baltimore City, MD

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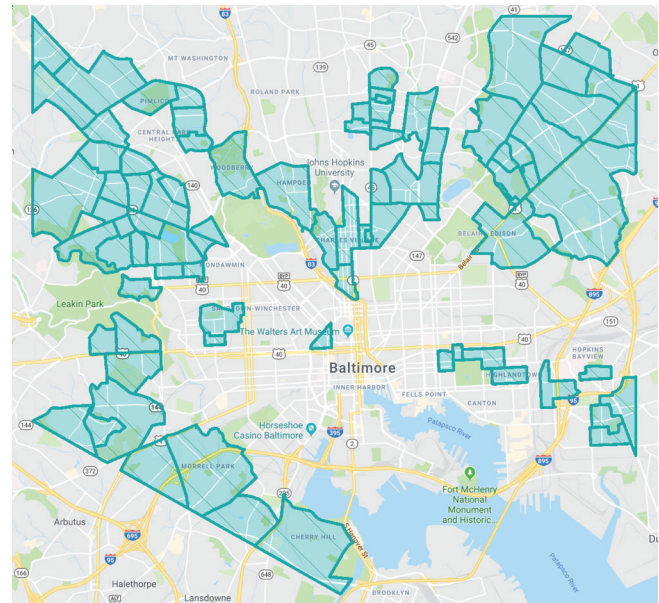
[c] This is streamlined code enforcement; not all vacant building notices (VBNs) follow this path. Properties in CD Clusters bypass the first and second citation and move directly to receivership.

interest, due to their proximity to stronger neighborhoods or community assets. The city works with a credible developer to implement a plan to rehabilitate these neighborhoods. The city facilitates demolition and maintains a pipeline of properties to be sold at auction, while developers bring private capital and are responsible for rehabilitating and selling the homes (**Figure 1.3**).

The SCENs and CD Clusters were established through the Reinvestment Fund's completion of a 2008 Housing Market Typology that divided the city into ten categories based on average sale price, sales activity, owner-occupancy rates, foreclosure rates, and the number of vacant homes, among other variables.[23,24] The strongest neighborhoods have high market demand and few, if any, vacant properties. Further down the scale are neighborhoods with some market activity but lower average sale prices and higher foreclosure rates. The weakest neighborhoods have little to no demand, very low housing prices, and have experienced significant population loss.[25] Because V2V is designed as a strategic market-based revitalization strategy, the SCEN and CD Cluster designations do not cover all neighborhoods in the city; specifically, they exclude neighborhoods with very strong and very weak market demand. In neighborhoods with weak market conditions that would require large-scale public subsidy for redevelopment, V2V focuses on maintaining quality of life for existing residents through demolition, maintenance and greening of vacant lots, and helping individual homeowners upgrade their homes.

Figure 1.3

Community Development Clusters (CD Clusters) in Baltimore City, MD
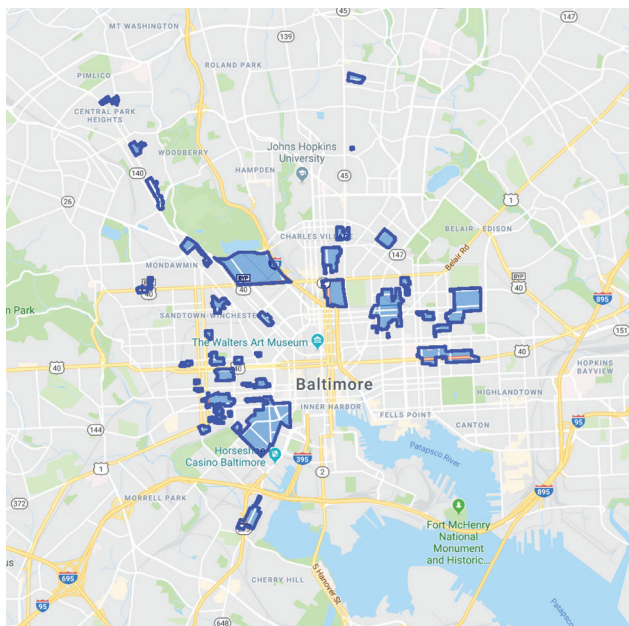
1.3   Prior Studies of V2V Challenges and Outcomes

At least three prior studies have examined Baltimore's V2V initiative. Each has relied primarily on quantitative analyses of V2V housing data and other neighborhood measures to assess V2V's ability to move properties from vacancy into productive use. In 2015, the Abell Foundation also drew from interviews with a few city officials and developers to support the first comprehensive report noting V2V's modest successes, its challenges with data, and inconsistencies in city-impact estimates.[22] The following year, the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance completed a quantitative analysis that found the V2V initiative had partial success in reducing vacant homes but little effect on the underlying market dynamics for neighborhoods.[26] Lastly, the Center for Community Progress completed a process and policy report in 2017 that examined V2V data in its first five years and concluded that overall, the program had achieved its goals;[27] the report also included interviews and focus groups to understand challenges in the initiative's administration.[27]

A few key findings from these program and process evaluations include:

1. **The V2V program has achieved its goal of reducing vacant homes in SCENs and CD Clusters.**

   All three evaluations of V2V found that the initiative in many ways successfully addressed the problem of vacant homes. The Center for Community Progress concluded, "where Vacants to Value is specifically designed to operate as a strategy to increase productive reuse of vacant properties in areas where market conditions enable the V2V strategies to leverage private resources, it has shown considerable success."[27] The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance also found that V2V "changed market dynamics with respect to vacant housing notices, median sales prices, and rehabilitation rates for the treatment areas."[26] Furthermore, the Center for Community Progress report argued that absent the V2V program, the number of vacant properties would be greater. The Abell Foundation report, which included the strongest critiques, found that V2V was "showing signs of success in rejuvenating neighborhoods that were long neglected, like Oliver, McElderry Park, and Greenmount West."[22]

   Across the 15 CD Clusters that comprise most (86 percent) VBNs, the number of VBNs declined from about 2400 to 1600 between 2010 and 2016, with 670 new VBNs issued since 2010.[27] By 2016, about three-fourths of the 2010 vacant property inventory was abated or in the process of abatement.[27]

   Moreover, developers of CD Clusters have done a better job of abating vacant homes and preventing new homes from becoming vacant, relative to similar surrounding areas. Comparison of CD to non-CD Clusters showed that, in most cases, CD Clusters had greater increases in abatement post-2010, compared to pre-2010. Similarly, CD Clusters had lower ratios of new vacancies, compared to non-CD Clusters.[27]

2. **V2V's success has been uneven across neighborhoods.**

   Some SCENs have seen vacant properties successfully transformed into productive use, while others have not.[26] For example, in Remington, the number of VBNs dropped by 50 percent between 2010 and 2016, and about three-fourths of the 2010 vacant buildings were abated. However, in Cherry Hill, VBNs increased by more than 50 percent, but only one-third of the 2010 vacant buildings were abated.[27]

3. **Receivership under V2V is an important tool for facilitating the rehabilitation process.**

   Beginning in 1991, the city occasionally used receivership to address vacant properties, but under V2V it dramatically expanded its use of this legal remedy.[28] From 2005 to 2009, the city filed 179 actions. That number increased to 2,400 actions between 2010 and 2015. A crucial component of Baltimore's vacant property receivership ordinance is that property title can pass before the property's rehabilitation, rather than afterward, which is the more common practice in other states. This receivership ordinance has proven tremendously effective for transferring vacant properties into new ownership and reuse.[27] Before the V2V program, Baltimore filed about 100 receivership cases annually, but following the program's launch, that number soared to 469 per year by 2014.[28]

4. **Energy-efficiency and weatherization programs used in conjunction with V2V have been less successful.**

    Energy-efficient retrofitting of existing homes served as a companion intervention under V2V. The Center for Community Progress observed that such energy-efficiency weatherization efforts, through the city's Division of Green, Healthy, and Sustainable Housing, is unlikely to have significantly affected neighborhood trajectories because the number of homes involved is relatively small (about 800 per year) and dispersed throughout the city. Additionally, the city must place about half of all weatherization applications on hold because underlying structural issues in the buildings make weatherization impractical or imprudent.[27]

5. **Underlying market forces in the neighborhoods continue to strongly influence vacant properties.**

    In most SCENs, vacant properties represent a small fraction of the housing inventory. In 2010, about 80 percent of SCENs had fewer than 5 percent of the area's properties deemed vacant. The median SCEN had only about 1.4 percent vacant properties. Vacant properties in these neighborhoods are likely a symptom of other factors rather than a driving factor of neighborhood instability. Specifically, the authors cite crime, drugs, school quality, and environmental quality as potential factors but note that they were unable to examine these factors more closely.[27]

    Despite the V2V program's success in reducing vacant properties, experts indicate that it can be most successful in neighborhoods where the underlying market conditions are strong enough for the V2V initiative to leverage private investments.[27] Additionally, as indicated by the increase in vacant properties in some SCENs V2V as a blight-remediation strategy cannot wholly eliminate other issues that may be driving the spread of abandonment.

    > **This means that in areas of Baltimore where the underlying housing market cannot support current revitalization and rehabilitation approaches, there are opportunities to revisit and supplement V2V with new tools and strategies.**

1.4   Knowledge Gaps in V2V Impact

Evaluation reports of V2V have not addressed its effects on the health and well-being of residents in V2V neighborhoods. The three program and process studies (described in Section 1.3) primarily investigated how well the V2V program met its goal of reducing vacant properties and returning them to productive use. These evaluations also looked at related questions, such as the effect on sale price or market dynamics. However, except for a mention of greening strategies in the Center for Community Progress report, the three previous evaluations of V2V do not consider community health impacts. Given that neighborhood revitalization is pursued to restore vitality and life in a community, it is critical to also understand the ways in which the neighborhood revitalization process affects community residents' lives.

1.5 Health Impact Assessments

Over the last two decades, planners and other decision-makers in the United States have increasingly used Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) to better inform proposed policy changes and infrastructure projects.[29] Based on quantitative and qualitative analyses, HIAs offer the best available data to decision-makers about health outcomes of community changes so that they can appropriately factor health into complex policy or program decisions. For example, the HIAs of redevelopment plans for over 50 units of low-income senior housing and new retail services in Oakland, CA resulted in recommended proposal modifications, such as design features to improve indoor air quality and reduce noise as well as plans for transportation options to retail services.[30] Few HIAs, however, have studied neighborhood revitalization initiatives and strategies, such as demolition, code enforcement, housing rehabilitation, and the roles and capacities of local governments and community-based organizations.[31]

2 METHODOLOGY

The overarching goal of this research is to document the range of community health impacts of V2V's strategic neighborhood revitalization initiative. The findings will inform the feasibility of a future, comprehensive HIA and strengthen links between public health and neighborhood revitalization in the fields of urban planning and community development.

Our study examined the following research questions:

1. To what extent has V2V impacted community health?

2. What are the available data and data needs to conduct a future HIA?

3. Who are the key stakeholders to engage as part of a future HIA?

Figure 2.1 Location of case example CD Clusters in Baltimore, MD

1 Park Heights

2 Milton-Montford

3 Central Baltimore

Our research design employed a case study approach, including a literature review and stakeholder interviews, to inform a cross-case analysis of three neighborhoods that represented different stages of the V2V revitalization process: early, middle, and late stages. A cross-case analysis allowed us to examine prominent themes, similarities, and differences related to the V2V experience and associated community health impacts across neighborhoods.

With the guidance of the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development, we identified CD Clusters in three distinct neighborhoods (**Figure 2.1**).

These CD Clusters included (1) the Garrison and Oakley CD Clusters in the Park Heights neighborhood of northwest Baltimore; (2) the Eager Street Commons CD Cluster in the Milton-Montford neighborhood of east Baltimore;[d] and (3) the Greenmount West CD Cluster in central Baltimore.

Each CD Cluster used V2V's first two strategies: streamline the disposition of city-owned properties and streamline code enforcement. However, the mix of the remaining strategies varied depending on the neighborhood context (**Table 2.1**). In the Eager Street Commons and Greenmount West CD Clusters, additional V2V strategies focused on facilitating investment in emerging markets and targeting home-buying incentives; in the Park Heights CD Clusters, additional V2V strategies focused primarily on supporting large-scale redevelopment and demolition of severely distressed blocks. Across all CD Clusters, V2V implemented some greening strategies by creating temporary green space after the demolition of vacant homes.

The research team conducted one-week site visits and follow-up meetings in each neighborhood from 2017–2018 and performed interviews with stakeholders involved in each of the three CD Clusters, including representatives from the V2V initiative, the Department of Housing and Community Development, developers, neighborhood association leaders, nonprofit organizations, and community residents.

Table 2.1 V2V strategies in CD Clusters	Park Heights	Eager Street Commons	Greenmount West
1 Streamline the disposition of city-owned properties	✕	✕	✕
2 Streamline code enforcement	✕	✕	✕
3 Facilitate investment in emerging markets		✕	✕
4 Target home-buying incentives[e]		✕	✕
5 Support large-scale redevelopment in distressed areas	✕		
6 Demolish and maintain severely distressed blocks	✕	✕	
7 Provide concentrated green, healthy, and sustainable home and neighborhood improvements	✕	✕	✕

The interviews included questions related to neighborhood conditions before V2V, experiences with V2V (challenges and successes), and outcomes of the initiative, including the community health impacts. The team conducted a total of 25 stakeholder interviews. Each interview ranged from one to two hours and included note-taking and audio-recording, with the interviewees' permission.

A professional service transcribed the audio recordings, and the research team then conducted a cross-case analysis that involved analyzing transcriptions, manual coding, and identifying cross-cutting themes. The team member-checked findings with each community, and respective community members conducted a review of each case study.

Additionally, our study of V2V builds on a recent strategic HIA of substandard housing and code enforcement in Memphis, TN, completed by the Urban Institute.[32] The Urban Institute research team

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d   A contentious issue in redevelopment strategies relates to renaming neighborhoods. The Eager Street Commons CD Cluster is a city designation for the cluster that is centered on Eager Street in east Baltimore. It is part of the larger Milton-Montford Neighborhood, but redevelopment activity focused primarily on properties within the cluster. Additionally, there has been a push to rebrand parts of the area as "Station East." For the purposes of this report, we will use Eager Street Commons to refer specifically to the CD Cluster and Milton-Montford to refer to the broader neighborhood.

e   V2V home-buying incentives were made available citywide; however, respondents reported that this V2V strategy was not actively used in the Park Heights CD Clusters, during the study period.

worked with a community development intermediary to apply the HIA's traditional six phases[f] early in the policy design stage. In this case, the Memphis HIA outlined a range of policy and program changes under the rubric of strategic code enforcement. This study of V2V in Baltimore, MD parallels the HIA's second phase of scoping, which involves consultation with stakeholders to inform the development plan for a future comprehensive HIA of V2V.

This study is not without limitations. The direct causal relationships between V2V and community health are challenging to measure. However, our research findings rely on qualitative data from diverse stakeholders that were also member-checked. Some degree of sampling bias due to the sample size may also exist. The results of this study are hypothesis-generating, and future research is necessary to corroborate our conclusions.

3   CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS RESULTS

In general, the neighborhood conditions and status of community health prior to the start of V2V were comparable across CD Clusters. Longtime residents recall challenges with a stressful living environment characterized by economic disinvestment, crime, trash and debris, and vacant properties and lots, up until the early 2000s.

Since the inauguration of the V2V initiative nearly a decade ago, there are noticeable differences among the Garrison and Oakley CD Clusters in the Park Heights neighborhood of northwest Baltimore, the Eager Street Commons CD Cluster in the Milton-Montford neighborhood of east Baltimore, and the Greenmount West CD Cluster in central Baltimore (see Annex for in-depth case examples of each CD Cluster at the end of this report).

This section presents the primary findings of the cross-case analysis. Specifically, themes from stakeholder interviews indicate the ways in which the physical and social dimensions of each neighborhood interacted and influenced the overall V2V experience and how V2V strategies can stabilize (or destabilize) community health in each respective CD Cluster (**Figure 3.1**):

1. The program design and management of the V2V process were affected by features related to a community's physical dimensions:

    a. Neighborhood footprint and degree of vacancy;
    b. Urban form;
    c. Neighborhood master planning.

2. The quality of V2V implementation and extent to which community members had opportunities to respond and adapt to neighborhood changes were affected by features related to a community's social dimensions:

    a. Social infrastructure;
    b. Community readiness;
    c. Community influence.

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[f] Screening, scoping, assessment, recommendations, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation.

Figure 3.1

Relationship between physical and social dimensions, and the impact of revitalization process on community health
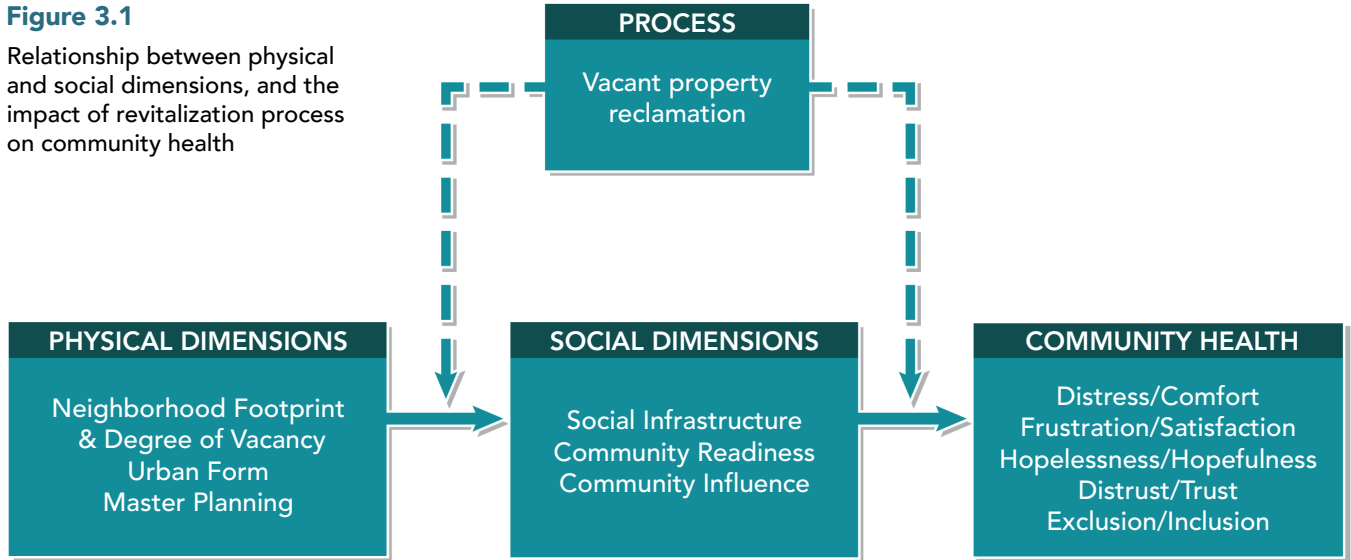
We provide a detailed discussion of themes that emerged from stakeholder interviews, to offer a more nuanced understanding of the impact of strategic neighborhood revitalization efforts on community health and well-being.

3.1 Neighborhood Physical Dimensions Guided V2V Design, Management, and Community Health

Based on interviews with stakeholders in each CD Cluster, we identified features related to a community's physical dimensions that affected the design and management of V2V implementation as well as community health outcomes. Specifically, findings from the cross-case analysis revealed themes centered on the neighborhood footprint and degree of vacancy, urban form, and neighborhood master planning.

3.1.1 Neighborhood footprint and degree of vacancy affected coordination efforts

The size of the neighborhood containing each CD Cluster influenced the design and management process of the V2V initiative. Specifically, we found that the neighborhood footprint and degree of vacancy were especially important to effectively coordinate, strategize, and execute V2V and related development activities. Generally, consensus on a community's vision was more achievable in neighborhoods of smaller size and where the degree of vacancy was lower.

	Neighborhood Footprint	Degree of Vacancy	Coordination
Park Heights	Larger	Higher	Lower
Eager Street Commons	Smaller	Intermediate	Intermediate
Greenmount West	Intermediate	Lower	Higher

Table 3.1 Comparison of neighborhood footprint, degree of vacancy, and coordination in CD Clusters

- The large, 1500-acre footprint of Park Heights created complex, challenging neighborhood dynamics that affected the administration of V2V, despite the Garrison and Oakley CD Clusters' small size relative to the entire neighborhood. Stakeholder interviews revealed competing priorities within the Park Heights community, which diverted and diffused attention and funding and increased barriers to building coordinated support. Moreover, the extent of vacancy in Park Heights called for a larger-scale solution that required more time and intentional coordination among different segments of the community, which were focused on their own agendas. Together, these factors contributed to minimal or delayed progress over time.

- In contrast, the Eager Street Commons CD Cluster, which included roughly three city blocks within a small, well-defined neighborhood, faced fewer barriers to coordinating and strategizing, resulting in noticeable changes in a shorter time frame. For example, due to fewer barriers in coordinating the decision-making process, developers, neighborhood leaders, and city officials experienced less difficulty in establishing revitalization goals with residents, developing a single, shared vision, and addressing potential concerns. Moreover, revitalization resources did not need to be stretched across numerous projects and could, instead, be targeted in a more strategic manner.

- The Greenmount West CD Cluster was intermediate in size and scope, in between the Eager Street Commons and Park Heights neighborhoods. Revitalization efforts in Greenmount West were still manageable, in part, due to relatively more-stable underlying market fundamentals. Greenmount West benefited from improved housing market conditions in surrounding neighborhoods, particularly redevelopment activity in the adjacent Station North neighborhood and the area around Penn Station. Additionally, Greenmount West had several relatively strong community organizations with the financial and staff capacity to coordinate the needs of different stakeholder groups.

> **For neighborhoods where the project magnitude was larger, our findings indicated the importance of mechanisms to support coordination, capacity building, and program implementation.**

Section 3.2 details the ways in which a community's social dimensions helped to guide the revitalization process.

3.1.2 Urban form characteristics enabled V2V tools to be leveraged to different degrees

Urban form encompasses decisions related to landscape ecology, economic structure, transportation planning, community design, and urban design.[33] Characteristics of urban form interface with economic and market decisions made by investors, government, and individual homeowners, all of which can generate stronger or weaker markets.[34] Prior research has shown that the influence of urban form is most favorable when numerous elements work together, e.g., mixed-used, density, and connectivity.[35] While the more-direct effects of urban form on health are relatively established in the literature, particularly related to pedestrian life and physical activity,[36] our research results highlight ways in which urban form can also indirectly

impact community health through revitalization strategies that support economic and neighborhood stability and vitality.

> **We found that core characteristics of urban form facilitated opportunities to leverage the tools offered by the V2V initiative, which further stabilized some communities.**

However, when core elements of urban form were lacking, V2V strategies adversely affected neighborhood vitality and community well-being.

Table 3.2

Comparison of urban form characteristics in CD Clusters	Housing Market Context	Mix of Amenities	Proximity to City Center	Pedestrian Connectivity
Park Heights	Weaker	Lower	Lower	Lower
Eager Street Commons	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Greenmount West	Stronger	Higher	Higher	Higher

- While it has not always been the case, a limited mix of amenities has characterized Park Heights in recent decades: the Sinai Hospital serves as the community's largest employer, the landmark Pimlico Race Course draws in visitors once per year, and a smattering of retail shops and alcohol outlets line the main streets. Relative to the Eager Street Commons and Greenmount West CD Clusters, the Park Heights neighborhood has a weaker housing market overall and is located farther from the city center; major roadways in this area largely serve as commuter corridors to and from Baltimore's suburbs rather than to destinations in Park Heights. As a result, this neighborhood's urban form has, over time, created additional barriers to securing investment and contributed to slower growth toward economic stability. Moreover, a driving-centric urban form can limit opportunities for physical activity and contribute to poor respiratory health.[37] In the absence of core urban form characteristics, implementation of V2V strategies in Park Heights focused largely on the demolition of vacant properties. In conjunction with challenges related to the neighborhood size, the extent of vacancy in Park Heights, and the lack of coordinated efforts (as described in Section 3.1.1), these conditions not only further contributed to delayed progress but also undermined the neighborhood's vitality.

- The Eager Street Commons CD Cluster comprises approximately three city blocks within the Milton-Montford neighborhood of east Baltimore. Most homes in this urban neighborhood are two-story row houses. There are a few small parks, and most nearby businesses are small-scale retail, including nail salons, barbershops, tax preparers, pawn shops, carryout restaurants, a liquor store, and a small grocery store. Eager Street Commons is immediately adjacent to the Middle East neighborhood, which has undergone enormous transformation due to the neighboring Johns Hopkins medical campus. Over the last two decades, Johns Hopkins has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in construction projects in the Middle East neighborhood. The proximity of the Eager Street Commons CD Cluster to this growth has been important to this area's stabilization and the success of the

cluster's redevelopment activities. For example, several new homeowners, also employed by Johns Hopkins, have used V2V's home-buying incentives to purchase a home in this neighborhood, in part due to the ease of the commute. Additionally, parks of various sizes have been added to the neighborhood as a direct result of V2V, which residents have anecdotally reported as having a positive effect on community health.

- For Greenmount West, the mix of land use and diverse amenities, such as access to public transportation, educational institutions, and a growing art community, provided some economic stability for this neighborhood, which was more clearly bounded on all sides by North Avenue, Green Mount Cemetery, the Charles North community, and the Station North Arts and entertainment districts. These distinct boundaries and strengths from within and surrounding areas, in particular the Baltimore Pennsylvania train station, drew interest to Greenmount West and greatly facilitated the implementation of V2V strategies in the neighborhood.

From this cross-case analysis, we identified important urban form elements that benefited both the Eager Street Commons and Greenmount West CD Clusters, including diverse amenities and proximity to major sources of employment and other, successful redevelopment projects. Opportunities remain in Park Heights to strengthen such elements so that the tools offered by the V2V initiative can be better leveraged. Still, because urban form elements take more time to influence and change, the development of neighborhood-specific plans and visioning processes can help to identify strategies for managing existing conditions, overcoming limitations in a neighborhood's urban form, and collectively planning for the future.

3.1.3 Existing neighborhood master planning influenced V2V implementation

At the city level, comprehensive master plans[g] are critical policy documents that guide a city's future land use and land development patterns, typically for more than ten years.[h] Local governments increasingly include special public health elements in their comprehensive master plans as a way to identify the closer connections and influence of urban planning, urban design, and the built environment on public health.[38]

Table 3.3

Comparison of neighborhood master planning in CD Clusters	Formal Neighborhood Plan	Year of Plan Adoption	Planning Process
Park Heights	Yes	2006	Yes
Eager Street Commons	No	—	Yes
Greenmount West	Yes	2006	Yes

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g When a comprehensive plan is developed as a long-range document, its adoption and implementation can have wide-ranging effects on all parts of a city and its neighborhoods, including transportation systems, housing, economic development, community facilities, green space, and more.

h In Baltimore, the city last adopted its comprehensive master plan in 2009.

Many local governments also apply the comprehensive master plan's vision and policy principles through a set of neighborhood-scale master plans.[i] Plans, whether comprehensive or neighborhood, can greatly influence the public's health and well-being, as evidenced by a growing body of literature on the links between safety, physical activity, quality of life, and the built environment.[38]

For our study, we found that neighborhood-scale master plans (their content and their development process) affected the quality of V2V implementation in the CD Clusters and thus, ultimately, its impact on community health:

- In Park Heights, a steering committee, comprising the Baltimore City Department of Planning, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Transportation, and Baltimore Development Corporation, hired an external multidisciplinary team to lead the development of the Park Heights Master Plan, which was adopted in 2006 and amended in 2008. With input from community members, the steering committee proposed a renewed vision for Park Heights as a community of physical and social well-being, a community of character, a community of opportunity, and a healthy community. The Park Heights Master Plan has served as the guiding document for redevelopment efforts in this neighborhood. However, the lack of a fully developed short- and long-term strategy, detailing an explicit time frame and action plan through which programs like V2V may be leveraged, has created an environment of short-term solutions in pockets of Park Heights that have prevented progress overall.

- Eager Street Commons (and the larger Milton-Montford Neighborhood) had an informal neighborhood planning process that involved the Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition (HEBCAC) working closely with residents to plan for the future of their neighborhood as part of the redevelopment efforts they led. This planning did not result in a formal document adopted by residents or local organizations, but the collaborative planning process facilitated the translation of residents' visions into a workable strategy.

- The Greenmount West Master Plan, adopted in 2006, emerged from a partnership between the New Greenmount West Community Association and the Baltimore City Department of Planning, to address growing development pressures in the neighborhood given its close proximity to major destinations, including the Baltimore Pennsylvania train station, downtown Baltimore, and the historic Mount Vernon neighborhood. Members of the New Greenmount West Community Association, residents, and other neighborhood stakeholders envisioned a Greenmount West that would grow to maintain its diversity, mixed-income households, and inclusiveness.

While neighborhood master plans are designed to fit the unique needs and objectives of certain localities, the standardization of master plans in practice is currently limited. This limitation contributes to variable alignment between neighborhood and city master plans and, thus, variable alignment between neighborhood and city efforts. We observed this disconnect to varying degrees for plans across the three neighborhoods. In a preliminary review of each neighborhood plan and its respective planning process, we found the following notable differences:

- First, the organization(s) leading the development of the master plan varied in terms of whether an internal or external entity served as the central driver.

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i   In 2018 Baltimore City established a new policy for guiding the development of community-driven neighborhood plans that are consistent with the overarching vision and goals set forth in Baltimore's master plan.

- Second, we found variable planning processes, in particular the mechanisms that facilitated plan-making with community residents and those whom the master plan would affect.

- Third, each plan's content and level of detail differed, for example, in their explicit connections to local and city-wide plans (i.e., the V2V initiative); analyses of current conditions based on data, including existing strengths on which to build; timelines for implementation; and groups responsible for executing specific tasks.

> **Neighborhood revitalization is more likely to benefit communities when alignment exists among community members' visions and goals, neighborhood plans, and the city's objectives for redevelopment.**

Results from the cross-case analysis revealed that misalignment can impact the quality of V2V implementation, resulting in effects on community members related to social capital and mental health.

3.2   Neighborhood Social Dimensions Shaped How V2V was Implemented, Opportunities for Community Response, and Community Health

Social dimensions broadly encompass the context and characteristics that impact the quantity and quality of social relationships and, ultimately, the resources produced and facilitated by these relationships.[8] Prior research has asserted that in a context with limited resources, social dimensions of a neighborhood are "a necessary ingredient" for uniting people and resources for collective impact[j] in community development.[39,40]

In this study, we observed differences in social dimensions across the CD Clusters that affected community members' perceptions and expectations of V2V as well as their capacity to respond to the initiative, which, in turn, impacted community mental health outcomes. Specifically, findings from the cross-case analysis shed light on themes related to a neighborhood's social infrastructure, community readiness, and community influence.

3.2.1   Social infrastructures advanced the collective impact of V2V and community members

Social infrastructure, meaning the quantity, diversity, and quality of social relationships, is generally understood as the glue that holds a community together. Our research found that each neighborhood's social infrastructure displayed various strengths and limitations, which translated to different degrees of support and engagement between community members and the V2V initiative. We found that social infrastructures may be a critical indicator of community health in the context of neighborhood revitalization, particularly related to community members' mental health and well-being.

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j The commitment of different actors to work toward a common agenda.

Table 3.4

Comparison of social infrastructures in CD Clusters

	Cohesion	Leadership	Backbone Organization
Park Heights	Lower	Lower	Weaker
Eager Street Commons	Intermediate	Higher	Stronger
Greenmount West	Higher	Higher	Stronger

- A former community leader described a once stronger and more cohesive social infrastructure in the Park Heights neighborhood. During the 1980s, the establishment of a neighborhood association led to efforts to create summer employment opportunities for young people. In addition, community members gathered regularly to maintain cleanliness along the streets, which prompted support from neighboring communities. However, economic disinvestment and poor leadership, among other contributors, have distressed this community's social fabric over time. Today, sub-neighborhood divisions and the lack of a unified voice have undermined the community's collective impact and overall health. Future opportunities remain to further strengthen social networks within and across sub-neighborhoods, so that the V2V initiative and community members can more effectively move toward a mutually beneficial vision.

- In Eager Street Commons, local leadership was crucial to the success of redevelopment efforts, particularly through effective resource mobilization and the building of formal and informal networks across stakeholder groups. Well before the start of V2V, local residents began developing a rapport with city leadership, including the police department to combat crime in the area and the housing department to support cleanup efforts. As a result of these established relationships, the Eager Street Commons community had a foundation on which to operate. Local neighborhood leaders worked closely with city representatives affiliated with the V2V initiative and with the primary developer, Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition (HEBCAC), to ensure that a shared redevelopment vision was achieved. However, sustaining the community vision remains a challenge as new residents move into the neighborhood, resulting in pressures to revisit the community vision.

- In Greenmount West, the community development corporation, Central Baltimore Partnership (CBP), was key in establishing processes and forums in which all voices could be heard. Serving as a convener, CBP supported individual and groups of partners in order to address various neighborhood issues, such as public safety, commercial development, sanitation, code enforcement, housing, workforce development, and more. CBP provided community members with a neighborhood planning framework that enabled all partners to work through their differences toward a shared vision for development. Additionally, CBP effectively mobilized resources by securing private and public funding. As a result of its strong social infrastructure, Greenmount West has successfully restored nearly all vacant properties in the neighborhood. Now, neighborhood efforts focus on ensuring a place for lower-income and long-standing residents and on maintaining and securing green space in the face of ongoing development pressures.

Our research, interviews, and site visits revealed that the presence of a backbone organization[k], such as HEBCAC and CBP, was critical to V2V's successful implementation. Although

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[k] An entity that is representative of community members and is able to pay close attention to and coordinate the needs of cross-sector groups and facilitate collective impact.

neighborhoods may have the same strength in leadership, they cannot achieve collective impact in the same way without a backbone organization.[41] As described above,

> **in neighborhoods where the scope of redevelopment is greater and where urban form makes it difficult to incentivize private investment, processes to establish a backbone organization are critical to strengthen the social infrastructure and prevent the undermining of community ties and mental health.**
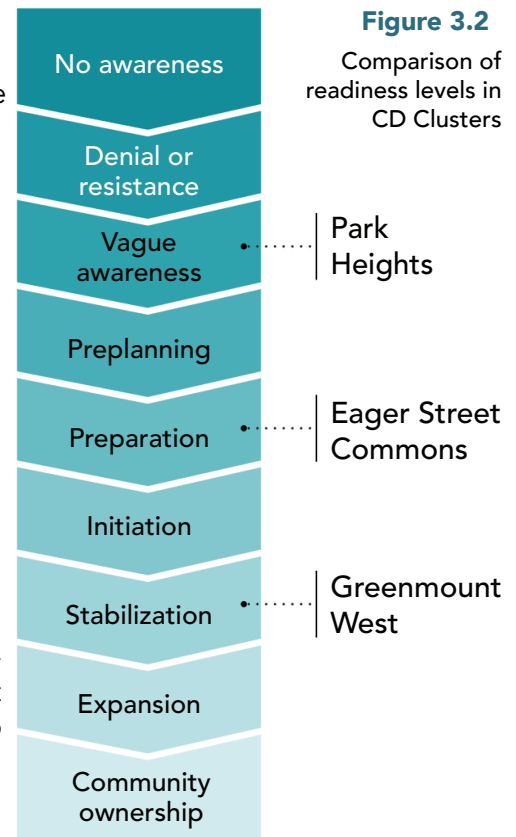
3.2.2   Community readiness impacted V2V success

Readiness is the degree to which a group is prepared to take action on an issue of concern, in this case, reclaiming and restoring vacant properties through the V2V initiative. Community programming is most effective and sustainable when the use of resources and strengths from within the community drives the programming.[42] When the affected community is engaged and all stakeholders come together to reach consensus, revitalization efforts are more likely to be appropriate for that community and sustainable over time. Thus,

> **revitalization programs should be tailored to the affected population's stage of readiness, to promote community ownership of changes and to increase the likelihood of success.**

According to the Community Readiness Model by Edwards and colleagues,[42] readiness is measured by a range of factors, including awareness of the issue, degree of denial/resistance, level of existing preplanning and preparation, initiation of efforts, stabilization, expansion, and community ownership. We observed variability in readiness levels across neighborhoods, which affected community members' expectations about the V2V initiative, forthcoming changes, and members' capacity to influence how V2V operated in each neighborhood (**Figure 3.2**).

- Community readiness was historically present in Park Heights but has declined over time. Relative to the Greenmount West and Eager Street Commons CD Clusters, readiness in Park Heights was the lowest. Members of this neighborhood have faced a range of challenges with identifying a unified voice and vision, in part due to lack of coordination among sub-neighborhoods and a community climate that did not serve to motivate leadership. Consequently, efforts to interact with the V2V initiative have been managed less effectively, and developers' and other decision-makers' messaging about redevelopment plans has

Figure 3.2

Comparison of readiness levels in CD Clusters

No awareness

Denial or resistance

Vague awareness ········· Park Heights

Preplanning

Preparation ········· Eager Street Commons

Initiation

Stabilization ········· Greenmount West

Expansion

Community ownership

been inconsistent, leading to delayed progress and sentiments of frustration, stress, and disillusionment among community members.

- The Eager Street Commons CD Cluster showed an intermediate level of readiness, given preplanning efforts that predated V2V. Community members began to organize about 15 years before the formal launch of the V2V initiative. In the late 1990s, residents took it upon themselves to improve neighborhood conditions by working to reduce crime, remove trash and debris, and beautify the neighborhood. Local leaders also developed strong relationships with city officials and neighborhood police officers. These relationships helped to ensure that problems within Eager Street Commons were taken seriously and mitigated.

- Prior to the launch of the V2V initiative, the New Greenmount West Community Association had already initiated several organizing efforts to address neighborhood concerns about safety and housing, among other issues. Thus, Greenmount West had a greater level of readiness, including an established forum through which concerns could be voiced. Furthermore, processes were already in place to facilitate communication with city officials and other stakeholders involved in redeveloping vacant properties in this neighborhood.

While participatory planning was formally or informally integrated in the community development process for each CD Cluster, the variable practice across neighborhoods highlights the importance of identifying communities' readiness levels so that planning processes can be effectively tailored to those levels. In neighborhoods where the social infrastructure was stronger, community members were better able to leverage the V2V initiative's suite of tools and resources.

3.2.3 Heterogeneous funding sources elevated community participation and influenced V2V implementation

Any strategic neighborhood revitalization effort that seeks to restore and reclaim vacant properties requires significant funds and financial investment, often from multiple sources, including federal funds, local foundations, institutional partners, private investors, and more. Our findings indicate the strengths and limitations of different funding mechanisms and processes for resource allocation across the Park Heights, Eager Street Commons, and Greenmount West CD Clusters. In particular,

> **heterogeneous sources of funding elevated communities' participation and their influence on revitalization efforts.**

Table 3.5

Comparison of funding sources and community influence in CD Clusters

	Funding Source	Community Participation and Influence
Park Heights	Homogenous	Lower
Eager Street Commons	Heterogeneous	Intermediate
Greenmount West	Heterogeneous	Higher

- For Park Heights, financial support for redevelopment was reported to be from a single source, relying largely on the Maryland slot-machine funding mechanism. From 2012 to 2014, an estimated $6 million was budgeted for redevelopment plans laid out by the Park Heights Master Plan. In addition, smaller amounts of funding were allocated from other city, state, federal, and private sources. However, due to the size and scope of needed restoration in Park Heights, overall progress has been slower in this neighborhood relative to others. Furthermore, weaker social infrastructures have shaped a context of limited community participation and control, resulting in less inclusive decision-making processes related to redevelopment.

- Financial resources for redevelopment in Eager Street Commons were slightly more heterogeneous compared to Park Heights. The Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition benefited from city funding to do strategic demolition. Additionally, several home-buying incentive programs (e.g., the Johns Hopkins Live Where You Work Program) helped to assure plans to redevelop homes were financially sound. Programs from Johns Hopkins University and the city reduced the up-front cost and risk of homeownership by contributing thousands of dollars in down-payment assistance to buyers. Additionally, the history of community organizing in this neighborhood allowed for some community control, as local leaders worked closely with developers and city representatives in the decision-making process.

- Relative to Park Heights and Eager Street Commons, the Greenmount West CD Cluster demonstrated more heterogeneous and inclusive funding mechanisms. The backbone organization in Greenmount West, CBP, was founded by a local philanthropic family foundation dedicated to neighborhood revitalization in Baltimore City and by a prior president of the Maryland State College of Art. With their leadership, vision, and support, CBP staff worked closely with the Greenmount West Community Association and other community members to identify development needs; then, together they secured funding from private developers and public entities, including grants and the city, to do the work.

3.3   Preliminary Community Health Impacts of V2V

The direct causal relationships between V2V and community health outcomes are challenging to measure and beyond the scope of this study. However, findings from this cross-case analysis indicate various dimensions of community health worthy of further exploration in a future, comprehensive HIA.

V2V successfully addressed some negative effects of vacant housing, particularly in the Eager Street Commons and Greenmount West CD Clusters. Residents shared anecdotes related to how the V2V initiative alleviated neighborhood stressors and promoted community health related to:

- **Trash and debris**

  "The other focuses that really make a difference is addressing trash, addressing how people dispose of trash. Working with the Greater Baltimore AHC [formerly Arlington Housing Corporation] to understand how they deal with trash in their apartments affects the larger community when it's not successful...I want to say we met for a whole year to address that particular issue." *– Resident in Greenmount West CD Cluster*

- **Pests**

  "All them houses was boarded up, raggedy, ugly. I used to have cookouts in the backyard and I stopped because it was infested with rats and the houses was boarded up. Now they done built three houses in the back. My son opened the door the other day because he put my trash out. He said mom, it is so pretty out here now, so pretty." – *Resident in Eager Street Commons CD Cluster*

- **Safety concerns**

  "I think safety of neighborhoods really is hinging upon eyes on the street. Again, by having occupied ... Whether they be rental properties or homeowner, it's just the eyes on the street… Just having those properties occupied-wise on the street, a little safer neighborhood."
  – Resident in Greenmount West CD Cluster

- **Opportunities to engage**

  "Well the new park, people be over there in the summer having cookouts. And I understand one young girl had a graduation party over there. And everything is calm and you don't have to be worrying about being scared to be on the steps." – *Resident in Eager Street Commons CD Cluster*

In Greenmount West, community members also described the ways in which the process of V2V implementation and related development served to advance community health in terms of:

- **Social capital** (trust and reciprocity) and **mental health** (sense of hope and ability to cope)

  "I think what we were able to do in our neighborhood is coalesce enough people that were willing to work together and come up with a plan. You gotta have at least an outline of where you're at, where you're trying to go, and where you want to try to take yourself to your future…I don't know how we were so fortunate to have so many good people that came in at one time...Coalition of the willing...You work with people that's willing to work with you."
  – Resident in Greenmount West CD Cluster

Despite these successes, our preliminary results also highlight opportunities that remain to further strengthen community health, particularly in the neighborhood of Park Heights, related to:

- **Environmental exposures** (fire, mold, particulates)

  "Well this one on this side caught fire. This one didn't have a roof, so [water] made damage to my basement, whereas I can't even go in my basement anymore." – *Resident in Park Heights CD Cluster*

- **Social capital** (social exclusion and distrust)

  "They did a lot of exterior cosmetics...Then you sit here, then you watch the news…they turn around and then quote, unquote, politicians. We got the money to do this, but yet, as you sitting there waiting, where's it happening? You don't see nothing... Meanwhile it takes time, okay, we took time, but it don't take 20 years, come on now…I went from being a kid to being a grandpa by the time something had happened." – *Resident in Park Heights CD Cluster*

- **Mental health** (frustration, anger, tension)

"[T]he new lady on the end that just moved in the neighborhood, she trying to change the neighborhood name and take over. New residents trying to make their own changes in the neighborhood...I don't know how she thinks she can come and take over because they only been on the block a year." – *Resident in Eager Street Commons CD Cluster*

"As I said, there were people being born and dying here. There were people celebrating birthdays. There were people having to go to a funeral. All of that was still happening amongst the vacants. There was still value amongst the vacants. That's the piece people have forgotten. Vacants to value, so you're telling me that the people been living here, they don't have value amongst the vacants. That's the problem." – *Resident in Greenmount West CD Cluster*

## 3.4 Conceptual Framework of Neighborhood Change and Implications for Community Health

In **Figure 3.3**, we summarize some of the ways in which V2V successfully addressed some negative effects of vacant housing as well as the opportunities to further promote community health in V2V neighborhoods.

The pathways depicted draw from the published literature and are corroborated by results from our stakeholder interviews.[1-10] Specifically, changes to vacant properties through V2V can positively affect proximal outcomes, including residents' exposure to particulates and mold linked to asthma and risk for respiratory infections. Community members also described the ways in which changes to vacant properties can positively affect intermediate outcomes, such as illegal activities and related violence, by addressing a significant source of trash, illegal dumping, and unlawful occupancy.

The process of revitalizing vacant properties through V2V can itself serve as a tool to positively impact community health, through meaningful community engagement and social inclusion that may collectively translate to mental health and well-being.

Figure 3.3 Potential direct and indirect pathways between vacant housing and community health outcomes
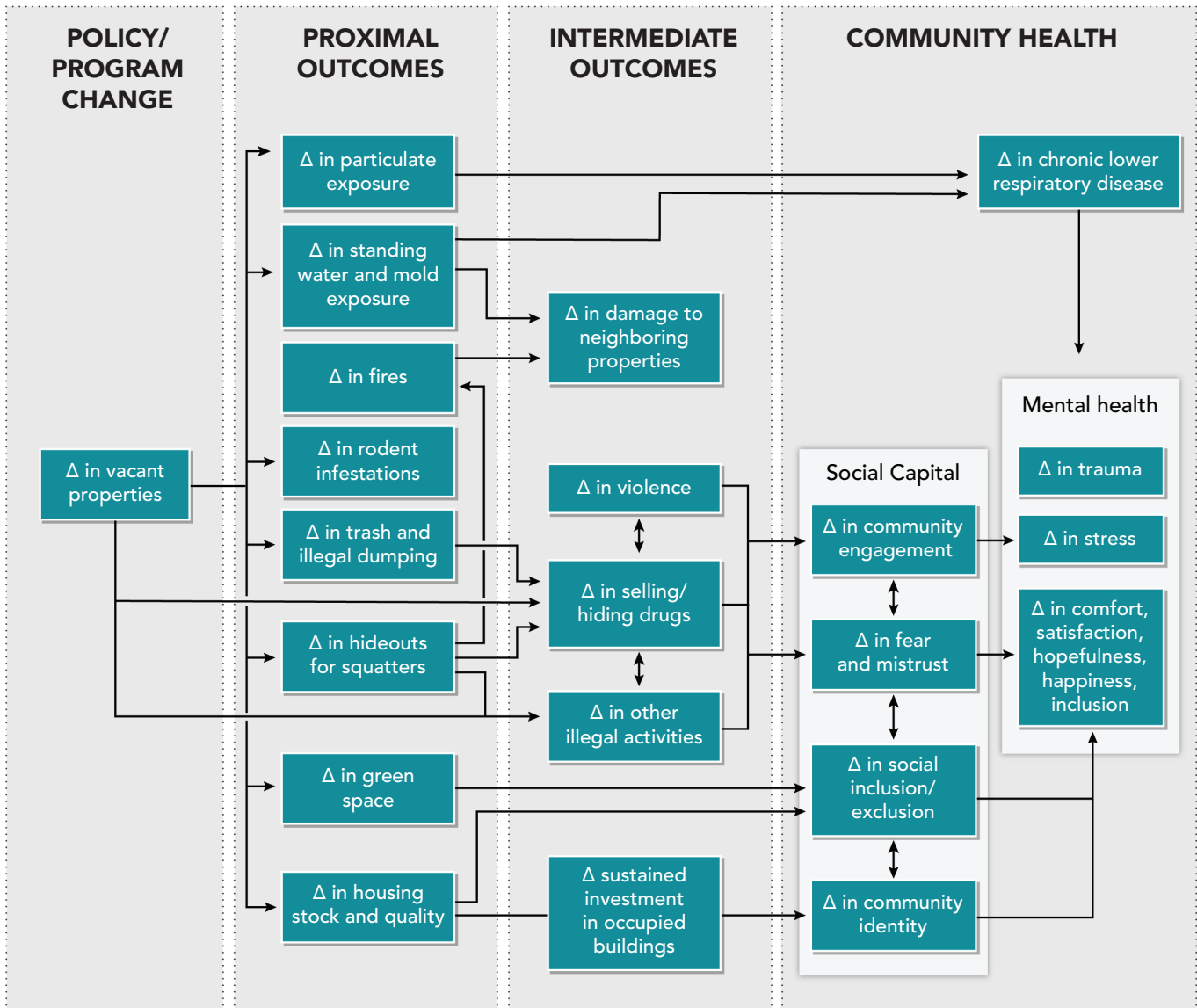
4 PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR A HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

By examining V2V through the lens of community health, our study elevates residents' insights on the impacts of V2V on themselves, their families, and neighborhoods. Our findings illuminate a range of considerations for a future, comprehensive HIA of V2V and inform the field on how community health can and should be a central consideration in the design, development, and deployment of similar strategic neighborhood revitalization initiatives.

Ultimately, housing officials, city planners, and public health specialists share the common mission to promote human welfare. However, planners and developers often focus more narrowly on the built environment and physical structures that make up a neighborhood and less on community health impacts. Public health practitioners and officials often concentrate more on the direct health outcomes of conditions within homes and less on the cumulative impact of disrepair in broader housing environments. In our judgment, strategic neighborhood revitalization initiatives, such as V2V, can impact community health in proximal and distal ways, as **Figure 3.3** illustrates.

While restoration of vacant properties may be a central objective, vacant properties are a symptom of larger social, economic, and political challenges. Thus, it is essential to acknowledge Baltimore's legacy of structural racism, poverty, population loss, and how these factors have influenced not only the city's overall economic health but also the current commercial and housing markets in V2V's CD Clusters and neighborhoods. These past and present socioeconomic contexts shape neighborhood conditions that range from substantial market weakness in some areas (i.e., high vacancy rates with little or no market demand) to relative market stability and strength in other areas (i.e., active rehabilitation and resale by private actors). The dynamic, diverse interactions of neighborhood conditions can impose substantial burdens on communities' health and well-being, some more than others and for variable lengths of time.

> **In our view, public health experts and housing officials should work together to strengthen the process of revitalization, which represents a critical opportunity to restore not only the built environment but also the social well-being and health of communities.**

To ensure that neighborhood changes benefit all members of communities where revitalization is planned, decision-makers can benefit from a more comprehensive understanding of how initiatives to change the built environment affect community health. In the urban policy field, this more integrated approach is known as "place-conscious" neighborhood revitalization.[43] We develop this concept by proposing "health-conscious" neighborhood revitalization in V2V neighborhoods.

We provide a preliminary framework for a comprehensive HIA of existing or future CD Clusters before implementation of revitalization plans[I]. As we discuss throughout this report, community health would serve as the cornerstone for a future, comprehensive HIA:

1. First, it is important to ask: **What is the geographic scope and scale for a future HIA?** Experiences in each neighborhood provide insight into the potential scope and scale. Numerous options exist, depending on the research questions, data needs, and how the research from the HIA would be used or applied. While our preliminary analysis examined three CD Clusters, a comprehensive HIA could examine the community health impacts for all CD Clusters categorized by neighborhood size: small, medium, and large. Alternatively, the HIA could focus on sub-neighborhoods of one larger neighborhood, such as Park Heights, to document the range of community health impacts of revitalization efforts within a larger footprint. The HIA could serve as a prospective study, which would allow time to reassess and modify V2V strategies before implementation, in order to mitigate barriers and challenges unique to larger neighborhoods, for example. The HIA may also focus on examining community health impacts resulting from different V2V strategies, e.g., the community health

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effects of code enforcement compared to the effects of demolition or of green, healthy, and sustainable home and neighborhood improvements.

2. The next step is to identify and prioritize areas of focus: **Which community health determinants and health outcomes will a future HIA focus on?** Our findings uncover a range of pathways, from changes in vacant properties to community health impacts, as Figure 3.3 illustrates. We propose that the HIA consider the following social, process, and physical health determinants:

    i.   Participation in decision-making by community members;

    ii.   Collaborations among public agencies, community organizations, residents, and health professionals (i.e., social capital);

    iii.   Community safety;

    iv.   Quality and accessibility of housing;

    v.   Environmental exposures (dust, mold, asbestos, etc.);

    vi.   Trash and illegal dumping;

    vii.   Fires;

    viii. Green space.

In addition, we recommend that the HIA evaluate impacts on the following community health outcomes:

    ix.   Mental health (stress, trauma, satisfaction, hopefulness, inclusion, etc.);

    x.   Respiratory health (asthma);

    xi.   Overweight and obesity;

    xii.   Cardiovascular health.

3. The next step involves an assessment of baseline conditions and anticipated effects: **What are the baseline conditions related to each community health determinant? What are the anticipated effects and V2V impacts on community health outcomes?** The scope and scale of the HIA will inform the assessment of baseline conditions and outcomes for each community health determinant. Answers to these questions will likely require in-depth data analysis, perhaps even original data gathering, and qualitative research in order to develop a comprehensive picture. For example, measurement of collective social capital would involve some form of stakeholder interviews, to reveal the social infrastructure, key players involved in a community, and funding mechanisms. A brief survey could supplement this information, by determining the community's readiness to engage with V2V, outcomes related to community participation, and newly established collaborations. Furthermore, we believe that community participatory research methods would be essential for a comprehensive HIA, given how social dimensions (e.g. social infrastructure) played such instrumental roles in the CD Clusters we examined.

4. To complete the baseline assessment and comprehensive HIA, it will be important to ask: **Which data resources are needed? Table 3.6** lays out suggested indicators for a sample of

community health determinants and outcomes as well as potential data sources. Our research for this project identified important administrative data on public health outcomes, including the CDC's SMART: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). Former health commissioner Dr. Leana Wen also led a city-wide community health assessment modeled after the CDC's BRFSS, including measures on the built environment, safety, and health outcomes. However, a comprehensive HIA could benefit from more-granular data at the level of block groups, for example.

Table 3.6   Community health indicators and potential data sources

Community Health Determinant/ Health Outcome	Indicators	Data Sources
Chronic lower respiratory disease	Age-adjusted mortality rate	Baltimore City Health Department
Collective social capital	Social infrastructure Community readiness Community influence	Stakeholder interviews
Community participation in decision-making	Community participation score	Community participation assessment tool[44]
Community safety	Crime rates	Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
Cross-sector collaborations	New working groups	Stakeholder interviews
Fires	Fire events	Baltimore City Fire Department
Green space	Parks Tree canopy	Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
Mental health[m]	Stress Depression Social isolation	CDC SMART: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; Baltimore City Health Department
Quality and accessibility of housing	Housing affordability (mortgage and rent)	Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
Trash and illegal dumping	Dirty streets and alleys	Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance

5. Lastly, an inclusive process will be valuable for the comprehensive HIA: **Who are potential HIA partners and stakeholders?** The HIA should engage a range of partners to assist, perhaps even lead, different data tasks, such as gathering original data or curating data from

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[m] Data are currently available at the city level

myriad sources. Given its experience and capacity, the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance would be a likely partner. Depending on the decided scope and scale, additional stakeholders should also include community leaders, developers, and city agencies involved in the implementation of V2V.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A HEALTH-CONSCIOUS PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF V2V

Baltimore's Vacants to Value initiative shows signs of transforming the built environment in certain Community Development Clusters. This removal or restoration of vacant, substandard properties has contributed to cleaner streets, access to green space, and of course, the building of new homes. However, the range of impacts and the degree of V2V's success in revitalizing neighborhoods vary according to numerous factors. These include neighborhood footprint, urban form, neighborhood planning, existing social infrastructures, community readiness, and community influence. Building on findings from prior studies of neighborhood change, our report uncovers the important interplay of a neighborhood's physical and social dimensions and outlines how these dynamics can affect the public health and well-being of local residents.

A hallmark of our report is the development of community health as a conceptual framework that defines and explains the intersection of these dynamics. Our analysis identified several preliminary physical and social dimensions of V2V's efforts that are linked to effective use of V2V strategies and the initiative's impact on social capital and mental health outcomes.

The findings of this report are not meant to be prescriptive. Rather, we highlight the study's key findings and offer the following recommendations to strengthen V2V's process, in order to advance community health in more place- and health-conscious ways in future CD Clusters:

1. **Conduct a pre-revitalization assessment**

    The social dimensions of a neighborhood, including social infrastructure, community readiness, and community influence, are critical for the success of V2V and community health. Therefore, before any action is taken, stakeholders driving V2V implementation should assess the existing social infrastructure, level of community readiness, and funding sources that enable community influence. V2V could consider the following questions:

    a. Which mechanisms are needed to ensure that a pre-revitalization assessment is feasible and completed?

    b. Which opportunities exist to build capacity among V2V implementers and developers to conduct such assessments?

    c. In which ways can V2V strategies be supplemented with additional tools that focus on the development of a neighborhood's social dimensions?

2. **Build capacity among community stakeholders**

Particularly in neighborhoods where elements of urban form (e.g., diverse amenities, proximity to employment opportunities) are limited and vacancy is higher, the revitalization process should simultaneously restore and strengthen a neighborhood's social and physical dimensions. V2V could consider the following questions:

a. Which mechanisms are in place to establish a backbone organization in each CD Cluster (e.g., Central Baltimore Partnership)?

b. What would it take for each CD Cluster to establish an advisory group comprising community stakeholders who work closely with V2V implementers and developers?

c. In which ways can a backbone organization or advisory group strengthen community readiness and facilitate the revitalization process, from visioning to planning, securing funding, enabling community influence, and implementation?

3. **Monitor and evaluate the revitalization process**

The process for implementing V2V strategies and the ways in which community members engage with V2V throughout the process are critical for the initiative's success and community health. Communities benefit most when planning processes meet foundational criteria and allow tailoring to each neighborhood's unique needs. To identify strengths and weaknesses and make improvements, a stronger culture of monitoring and evaluation of redevelopment processes is needed. V2V could consider the following questions:

a. In which ways can V2V plans better align with neighborhood master plans, i.e., build on existing goals and visions?

b. Which metrics related to changes in a neighborhood's physical and social dimensions can be monitored?

c. How can partnerships with community and/or public health organizations support the monitoring and evaluation of V2V's revitalization process?

As we outline above, the City of Baltimore and its nonprofit and community partners could benefit from a more robust, in-depth Health Impact Assessment (HIA). An appropriately timed, full HIA could inform the city and the community as they consider the recalibration and potential next iteration of V2V. A comprehensive HIA would also make significant contributions to the housing and community development field, which too often fails to consider the public health implications of their important work.

GLOSSARY

1. **Abatement:** the suspension or cessation of a housing code violation.

2. **Acquisition:** the act of taking ownership or control over a building or piece of property.

3. **Code enforcement:** a core municipal service whereby local government agencies ensure compliance with applicable housing, building, zoning, and property maintenance codes, through inspection, citation, and judicial enforcement actions, as required by the codes, against property owners for deficiencies in their physical property.

4. **Demolition:** the act of tearing down or removing a physical building. Within the V2V context, demolition is a key precursor to either creating more green space or facilitating large-scale site assembly.

5. **Disposition:** the act of transferring ownership of a property from one person to another.

6. **Receivership:** a legal procedure whereby the government petitions the court to appoint a new entity (e.g., the receiver) to manage the demolition or rehabilitation of an abandoned property; if the owner fails to pay for the costs incurred by the receiver, then the court has the power to transfer ownership of the property to a new organization, often a nonprofit entity.

7. **Rehabilitation:** the act whereby an individual or organization improves the physical qualities of a blighted building. Typically it involves turning a previously uninhabitable building into a habitable one.

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