

# CHEER

Community Health and Empowerment  
through Education and Research



## The Takoma Park and Long Branch Community Strategic Plan for 2012



## Introduction

The mission of CHEER is to give people the knowledge and ability to create healthy, thriving communities. The first step in that process is for a community to decide on the shared goals and actions they are going to take together to create the kind of community that fulfills its shared vision. With this need in mind, CHEER sought input from a representative group of community leaders as they embarked upon a two month long community strategic planning process in early 2012. This process stirred the energy, creativity, and determination of community members to fulfill their shared dream of a healthy thriving community.

## Background

From the fall of 2008 to the spring of 2010, CHEER conducted a series of visioning processes. Small groups of 12 to 18 people formulated visions, goals, and indicators for housing, health, and the local economy. Each of these groups was representative of the racial/ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the community. Additionally, other community members provided input to the process so that nearly 100 community members participated. The members came up with three vision statements and 22 separate goals for their community. You can see the list of these goals in appendix A.



The question remained: Which of these 22 goals should drive our community improvement efforts over the next five years? Which intermediate (one or two year) goals should be taken to fulfill them? What actions are needed to achieve the intermediate goals and what resources are available to take those actions?

## 2012: The Process

In February and March of this year, CHEER conducted a community strategic planning process to answer these questions. CHEER engaged more than 40 community leaders to select the highest priority goals for the Takoma Park and Long Branch community, and to suggest intermediate goals, actions, and resources needed to fulfill those goals. As in 2008 and 2010, these participants were selected to be representative of racial/ethnic and geographic diversity of the Long Branch and Takoma Park communities. The list of participants is provided in Appendix B.

The 2012 process consisted of three planning sessions. The first, held on February 12 at the Long Branch Community Center, involved 23 participants and lasted six hours. During this session, participants prioritized overall goals and brainstormed a preliminary list of intermediate goals, actions, and resources for taking action. The second session held at the TESS Center on March 1 was attended by 7 new participants and performed the same tasks as the previous session. At the final session on March 13, 27 participants prioritized intermediate goals, added more actions, and identified additional resources for taking action. By this last meeting, nearly half of the participants had attended a previous session. In addition, input from several community leaders unable to attend a session was incorporated into the process.

## The Results

The most overwhelming concerns focused on four areas; in order of priority they are (1) employment opportunity, (2) health care access and equity, (3) housing affordability, and (4) neighborhood engagement and connections. Strong concerns were also expressed for (5) creating safe and comfortable spaces for people to interact and promoting local businesses.

Participants in the community strategic planning process also suggested intermediate goals be addressed in the next two years and specific actions be taken in the near future. Below is a list of the major goals and the intermediate goals. Actions and suggested resources related to these goals are listed following the goals section.

## Goals

***Goal 1: Employment opportunities are provided to the community and community members have access to training in order to obtain the skills they need to seek employment.***

**Local Business Development:** A positive local business climate promotes local job growth, attracts employers, expands job opportunities, and promotes small business (micro enterprise) development.

**Skills and Employment Training:** Current technology- and employment-related education is available, and a partner organization develops and offers job training and apprenticeships for youths, day laborers, and others.

**Local Finance:** Loans for small business development (banks, county funds, etc.) are readily available.

**Youth Leadership Development and Job Preparation:** At least one youth program pilots youth leadership development. An intensive summer jobs program designed for youth trains and provides jobs.

***Goal 2: All people have access to health services and disparities are reduced.***

**Health Care Access:** People are able to navigate health care access, and information on health care access and charity care is available and well known.

**Cultural Competence:** All clinics are linguistically and culturally competent.

**Wellness:** Community members are engaged in wellness activities such as nutrition, exercise, and social activities.

**Waiting Lines:** Lines at clinics (e.g. mobile med) are reduced.

**Health Enterprise Zone:** Takoma Park/Long Branch is a health enterprise zone.

**Washington Adventist Hospital Transition:** As Washington Adventist Hospital (WAH) relocates, access to healthcare is sustained and information on health services is available.

**Food Security:** Research and reports on food insecurity issues are conducted for Takoma Park and surrounding areas.

**Health Assessment:** Research and reports on health needs and services are conducted for the Takoma Park and Long Branch community.

### ***Goal 3: Make housing equally available to all income levels.***

**Homeowner Preparation:** Programs that prepare renters to become owners are operating.

**Housing Workgroup:** A housing work group exists that actively seeks incentives to create affordable and mixed income housing, create lower income housing cooperatives and other forms of shared housing, and support tenants and institutions that seek to improve and rehabilitate housing.

### ***Goal 4: Neighbors know each other and are involved in common projects and activities.***

**Neighbor Connections:** Every neighborhood has an active neighborhood association, and every tenant has an active tenant association.

**Community and Neighborhood Events:** Events are regularly held where homeowners and tenants interact.

### ***Goal 5: The community provides safe and comfortable spaces for interaction and commerce. Other sectors (government, nonprofit, academic, community) support the business sector while the business sector supports the community.***

**Local Business Information:** Local residents have better information about local businesses and services.

**Accessibility:** Business locations are pedestrian-friendly. There are safe sidewalks that are wheelchair accessible, and business locations are convenient for residents, especially seniors.

**Common Area:** A “town square” space in Long Branch exists.

**Business Incubator:** A program that supports local entrepreneurial business success through an array of coordinated services is functioning and vibrant.

**Commercial Space:** Local small businesses have affordable commercial space.

**Allocation of Existing Space:** Better use is made of existing space (space could be used for meeting)

**Local Food:** Increase the proportion of food-based local businesses to encourage more interaction. Community kitchens are developed and utilized.

## Actions and Resources

Listed below are actions and resources suggested by participants in their processing meetings. Please note these are still in the “brainstorming” stage. No organization has yet made a commitment to provide assistance.

### ***Goal 1 Employment Opportunity Actions (with resources suggested by participants in parentheses):***

- Survey of who in community needs training
- Understand the needs of different demographics in the community
- Focus on jobs needed/skills needed for 5 populations: youth, single moms, people underemployed due to recession, seniors, disabled (Resource: Work with Montgomery College for skills and possibly needs assessment)
- Encourage local employers to hire more locals (Note from participant: “Why doesn’t the City have a *hire local first* policy?”)
- Define local opportunities for jobs and job skills development and support intermediaries (Resource: Montgomery College Certificate Programs)

- Résumé and job search classes for everyone (Resources: YMCA, Montgomery Works, IMPACT Silver Spring, Empower Women International, Latino Economic Development Corporation, Adventist Community Services/ Washington Adventist University/ Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE))
- Understand county/regional/DC opportunities (Resource: Montgomery County Department of Economic Development)
- Identify and promote career counseling--different fields of work, keeping a job, training needed (Resource: Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington)
- Create a web-based job board
- Get information on what Montgomery Works does (Notes from participants: "Montgomery Works sends out weekly emails on job opportunities." "It runs job training programs for youth and adults.")
- Investigate what Montgomery County offers in high school vocational programs and expand its offerings
- Collaboration with youth programs/schools
- Support existing and create new mentorship programs (Resources: Making A New United People (MANUP), Takoma Park Recreation Department)
- Identify who is working on vocational training for youth (Resources: Prince George's Community College, Blair and Northwood High Schools, Montgomery County Public Schools' High School Academy Programs, Montgomery College, Latin American Youth Center)
- Make people aware of vocational training availability (Resource: Montgomery College Certificate Programs)
- Facilitate discussion among unions, Casa de Maryland, businesses, and those who serve youth to connect youth and opportunities (Resources: IMPACT Silver Spring, Old Takoma Business Association and other local business organizations, Takoma Park Recreation Department, Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board)
- Lobby for summer jobs program (Resources: Takoma Park Recreation Department, Public Works)
- Highlight local employers who hire local youth
- Research the best practices in youth employment and bring these practices to youth serving groups
- English for professionals classes (Resource: Montgomery College)
- English for parents and kids (Resource: Family Forest Most Center (parents with children under 4))

- Identify opportunities for people with professional skills from other countries to transition those skills in this community (Resources: Casa de Maryland, Montgomery Works, Montgomery College, Literacy Council of Montgomery County)
- Establish and support institutions that address barriers for immigrant professionals, such as “Welcome Back Center” (Resources: Lutheran Social Services, International Rescue Committee of the International Committee of the Red Cross at Silver Spring)
- Provide childcare support for college students
- Connect with Montgomery College and collaborate around job training.
- Explore options and opportunities for recently released convicts
- Publicize in community/business event calendars such as WGTS, Civic Center, Library Calendar, Takoma Voice

Resources for general help with employment, training, and business development: Montgomery Works, Catholic Charities, IMPACT Silver Spring, Empower Women International, Latino Economic Development Corporation

Resources for general help with local finance: Azalea Credit Union, Old Takoma Business Association

## ***Goal 2: Health Actions (with resources suggested by participants in parentheses):***

- Create a clearing house of health access information: (Note from participant: “Define health broadly; include mental health, chronic health issues, prevention, wellness education.”)
- Coordinate information with schools so information goes home with students (Resources: School Based health centers, PTAs)
- Share health information in schools, community centers
- Put information on how to access health services (where to go) into libraries and community centers (Resource: Holy Cross health workshops)
- Know what types of health care are available (Resource: Mary’s Center)
- Create a services information packet and make it available to everyone with priority to non-English speakers
- Offer training and certification program for health education at point of care (Resource: Montgomery College)



- Facilitate community health fairs (Resource: Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington)
- Designate a “Health Block Captain” who has access to health provider information: (Note from participant “build on emergency prep committee.”) (Resources: Holy Cross Hospital, Casa de Maryland)
- Get information on status of Washington Adventist Hospital and publicize
- Connect with “Seniors and Those Who Care For Them” Program in Takoma Park.
- Identify/collect data on health needs and services (Resource: Healthy Montgomery and National Center on Health Statistics)
- Partner with Montgomery College so students can help provide health services
- Provide supplemental staffing and volunteers to clinics
- Apply to be a Health Enterprise Zone
- Measure gap between health needs and services
- Provide more opportunities for exercise classes (Resources: IMPACT Silver Spring, TESS Center, Mary’s Center, Adventist Community Services operates pool at Piney Branch Elementary School)
- Encourage talk of health care topics (Resources: Minority Health Initiatives at County DHHS (Latino Health Initiative, Asian American Health Initiative, African American Health Program, Active Health Promoters and Volunteers)
- Address language barriers in neighborhoods, clinics, and hospitals
- Make Language Line more efficient and easier to access (also make available in hospitals and community clinics in the area)
- Investigate food security conditions in Takoma Park and Long Branch (Resource: Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington, Takoma Park Presbyterian Church)
- Get information on and promote treatment of chronic diseases (Resources: American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, American Stroke Association, American Cancer Institute, Mental Health Advisory Committee)
- Connect with organizations that work with chronic diseases
- Promote breastfeeding
- Encourage early prenatal care for all
- Support walking (the built environment) for children
- Provide information on charity care and financial assistance for medical care

## ***Goal 3 Housing Actions (with resources suggested by participants in parentheses):***

- Research what it would take for accessory housing/cottages to become affordable housing
- Identify and use legal help related to code violations (Resources: Pro Bono Legal Clinic, Commission on Landlord and Tenant Affairs, Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Code Enforcement)
- Coordinate efforts with Takoma Park housing organizers to make tenants aware of resources
- Encourage tenant associations to be more effective advocates (Resources: Montgomery County Landlord-Tenant Affairs, Linda Walker at the City of Takoma Park, Casa de Maryland)
- Host multi-tenant association meetings (Manna DC) to share ideas (Resources: IMPACT Silver Spring)
- Drop-in clinic through Montgomery County Bar Association for tenant associations
- Identify and use legal help to enforce landlord responsibility
- Promote government refinancing and other government programs
- Educate local organizations to promote government refinancing
- Work in Partnership with MHP, PDP, MANNA
- Meet with Montgomery Housing Partnership (Note from participant: “MHP needs to screen tenants and maintain safety; 906 Browning is a chronic source of trouble affecting the community.”)
- Provide education to renters who have a long-term goal of home ownership (Resources: King Connections, The Partnership for Housing Recovery and Sustainability)
- Review current data on housing in TP/LB to identify impact of condominium conversion (Resources: Montgomery County Park and Planning Commission or Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs)
- Form a housing policy work group
- Call a meeting of local developers
- Research incentives for housing
- Put a member on Elrich’s housing Task Force
- Advocate for county increased funding of the Housing Initiatives Fund (Note from participant: “Montgomery Housing Partnership wants this, testify with them for it.”)

- Identify a City or County Council member who is a housing champion (Resources: County Council members George Leventhal, Marc Elrich, Hans Riemer, Valerie Ervin, Nancy Navarro)
- Keep NH Ave, Houston & Roanoke, and Long Branch in the conversation (Resources: New Avenues and Civic Associations in that Area)
- Bring Habitat for Humanity and CDC's to the area (Resources: Montgomery County and DC Habitat for Humanity) (Note from participant: "DC does rehab as well as new. Mont County works up county. Shepherd's Table in Silver Spring does rehab also.")
- Set up meeting with Habitat group
- Offer classes on financial literacy, i.e. saving, investment, retirement (Resources: Washington Adventist University/ Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE))
- Provide legal assistance to low-income residents having to deal with collection agencies (Resource: National Association of Consumer Advocates, see [www.naca.net](http://www.naca.net) for details)

General Resource for Housing Action: Housing Opportunity Commission, Montgomery Housing Partnership

### ***Goal 4 Neighborhood Connections Actions (with resources suggested by participants in parentheses):***

- Create and support neighborhood civic associations
- Organize tenant groups in more apartment buildings
- Increase attendance at tenants groups
- Identify causes of transience
- Determine language needs of tenant groups
- Connect with city tenant organizers
- Increase knowledge about tenants' and neighbors' rights and responsibilities
- Expand "International Dinners" and festivals in the community (use upcoming political elections) (Resources: the Takoma Park Recreation Committee, Takoma Park Presbyterian Church, Takoma United for Engaged Community)
- Create family activities that people feel comfortable attending
- Increase opportunities for tenants and homeowners to interact
- Long Branch Block Party (Resources: Oakview Initiative)
- Neighborhood block parties--invite other neighborhoods (Resources: Neighborhood Opportunity Network, Community Connectors at TESS Center)
- CHEER monthly potlucks

- Know and harness information about where people congregate
- Identify public places to gather (Resource: Electric Maid as a space)
- Identify common projects/activities (e.g. Food, support a tenant association that is suing a landlord)
- Community-based organizations come together to brainstorm about how to connect people across organizations
- Initiate dialog among existing institutions, especially faith communities
- Use existing connections in CHEER to facilitate meetings
- Expand partnerships with organizations that have space (Resource: Takoma Park Presbyterian Church has space)
- Revive the city gym
- Get County to rebuild New Hampshire Avenue Gym
- Buy Takoma Park Presbyterian Church Gym
- Get people to teach languages. Distribute information on people interested in teaching a language (Resources: IMPACT Silver Spring, Casa de Maryland)
- Identify Neighborhood needs and match to services, recreation, and other facilities.
- Maximize use of city-owned van
- Hold large events to promote cross cultural connections (Resource: Takoma Park Presbyterian Church has space)
- Initiate dialogues in apartment buildings about common needs and wants (Resource: IMPACT Silver Spring (2) Long Branch Community Center)
- Neighborhood network “welcome package” (Resource: Neighborhood Opportunity Network Sites, IMPACT Silver Spring, Long Branch Community Center, TESS Center)
- County provides funding for community projects
- Organize neighborhood safety watches to watch kids (so kids can play outside without parents having to go with them) (Resource: Community police, IMPACT Silver Spring)
- Neighbors take back the street
- Support existing neighborhood organizations
- Encourage more outreach in neighborhood associations
- Explore a range of ways to engage tenants
- Support relationship building to support tenants’ groups
- Advocacy

General Resource for Neighborhood Connections: IMPACT Silver Spring, TESS Center, Takoma Park Presbyterian Church.

## ***Goal 5 Business Development and Community Space Actions (with resources suggested by participants in parentheses):***

- Support craft fairs/swap meets within existing apartment building
- Promote flea markets
- Promote Flower Avenue Farmers Market (Resource: IMPACT Silver Spring)
- Promote indoor market
- Find space for an indoor market
- Bring together vendors for indoor market
- Market/plan shopping areas
- Provide affordable commercial space for local small business
- Distribute information about how to use space in community center, especially on Maple Ave (more than a community newsletter)
- Make better use of civic center (Resource: Silver Spring Regional Service Center, Reemberto Rodriguez)
- Provide better information on existing space
- Survey empty places and barriers to filling them (Resource: University of Maryland school of urban planning)
- Create partnerships for community use of existing institutional space
- Make public space more available for community events
- Make vacant space more available for activities and events
- Identify and advertise space in apartment buildings, faith communities, and other affordable space (Resources: Takoma Park Presbyterian Church has space for meetings and classes)
- Open Montgomery College and University of Maryland to community (1) Montgomery College
- Use virtual/on-line space
- Document lighting issues and contact public safety about street lights, especially in front of the community center
- Identify community kitchens with vendors by creating inventory and make vendors aware of space (Resource: Takoma Park Presbyterian Church Kitchen, Crossroads Community Food Network)
- Coordinate and host food handling training for potential vendors (Resource: Montgomery County food protection)

- Host meeting for current business owners and potential business owners (Resources: Washington Adventist University/ Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), King Connections)
- Identify steps to bring incubator mode to Takoma Park (Resources: Washington Adventist University/ Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE))
- Identify business needs (Resource: Long Branch Business League)
- Spur more interaction within existing neighborhoods; CHEER should develop a campaign for this
- Promote a business forum/support group for small/new businesses (Resources: Washington Adventist University/ Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), Long Branch Business League, Montgomery County Department of Economic Development, Takoma Langley Crossroads Community Development Authority)
- Conduct more personal activities to raise awareness about community (door knocking, TP community organizers, fliers in the lobby)
- Encourage businesses to provide translation for customers speaking other languages
- Provide activities and materials in multiple languages
- Encourage businesses to provide “samples”
- Encourage businesses to donate to community through “special days”
- Influence policy on tax breaks/ lease to business in exchange for internships
- Create workshops that will instruct new entrepreneurs on how to most effectively use aid
- Advocacy

## APPENDIX A:

### TAKOMA PARK AND LONG BRANCH CONSOLIDATED VISION AND GOALS FOR HOUSING, HEALTH, AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

For the Strategic Planning Process we asked participants to prioritize and select from the list below the goals that CHEER should focus on for the next few years. Participants were also able to suggest areas where vision and goals should be developed.

#### Housing Vision

The Takoma Park/Long Branch communities envision well-maintained housing that is safe and energy efficient. Cultural, age, and income diversity as well as easy access to work and public transportation within neighborhoods are a priority. A community that promotes person-to-person interactions is highly desirable.

#### Housing Goals

**Affordability:** Make housing equally available to all income levels.

**Housing Quality:** Residents live in well-maintained homes and can maintain the quality of their dwellings.

**Housing Opportunity:** Residents are able to live in the community where they want to live.

**Neighborhood Stability:** Housing costs remain stable and involuntary displacement is minimized.

**Neighborhood Connections:** Neighbors know each other and are involved in common projects and activities.

**Energy Efficiency:** Increase home energy efficiency.

**Safety:** Residents live in safe neighborhoods with low crime rates.

**Access:** Residents live near or have convenient access to their work and other needs.

## Health Vision

The Takoma Park/Long Branch communities envision a community of strong social networks rich in interactions that empower individuals and families to improve health and fitness, prevent illness, develop a sense of well-being, and foster each person's potential for a long, active, and fulfilling life. The community will:

- Offer multiple sources that can provide health information, including community-based health education.
- Offer equal access to all necessary health services (such as appropriate preventive services provided regardless of financial means and geographic location) so that health outcome disparities among socio-economic groups are reduced.
- Offer healthy choices in terms of nutritious, locally grown food, healthy homes, and a clean and healthy environment.
- Be designed to accommodate and encourage physical activity.

## Health Goals

- Health information is available from a variety of sources within the community and readily accessible to all.
- All people have equal access to health services and disparities are reduced.
- A diversity of health services are available and patients can choose how they receive health care.
- Individuals take action to promote their own wellness and manage their health.
- Social structures, networks, and community institutions support people's health.
- Individuals experience good health.



## Local Economy Vision

The Takoma Park/Long Branch communities envision a vibrant, prosperous, connected community that promotes safe, comfortable, and eco-friendly interaction and trade in commercial and residential settings. The community will:

- Offer information, skills, mentors, and capacity building opportunities for resident individuals and businesses to improve their ability to meet the wants and needs of people in the community and beyond.
- Create an environment that offers dynamic economic opportunity and allows individuals and businesses to innovate and experiment by allowing a reasonable profit from their efforts and allowing them to redirect, retrain, and persevere when they fail or suffer loss.
- Capitalize on the unique character of the community by using it to diversify and foster creativity and innovation.
- Promote equity amid diversity through mutual support, cooperation, oneness, and virtuous exchange.

## Local Economy Goals

- The community provides safe and comfortable space for interaction and commerce.
- Locally owned and independent businesses form the basis of the business sector and maintain reciprocity with community needs.
- Businesses and entrepreneurs have access to and utilize information on local markets and training needed to be successful.
- Other sectors (government, nonprofits, academic community) support the business sector and the business sector supports the community.
- Diversity is recognized as a business asset.
- Transitions over time are managed in a way that protects individuals, small businesses, and the community at large.
- Employment opportunities are provided for community residents, and community residents have access to training in order to develop the skills they need to become employable.
- The local economy functions in an environmentally sensitive way.

## APPENDIX B:

### STRATEGIC PLAN PARTICIPANTS AND CONTRIBUTORS

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