

Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission (January 23, 2017)

Comments on Reinvest Maryland Report – Recommendations on “Create and Better Fund Innovative, Effective Reinvestment Programs” (without attribution)

(Commission members are encouraged to add, correct or clarify any of the comments recorded below. Please send your changes to Chuck Boyd)

- Some of the recommendations associated with Program chapter, such as aligning applications for funding, have taken place since the original Reinvest Maryland Report was issued. For example, three of DHCD’s Programs - Baltimore Regional Neighborhoods Initiative, Strategic Demolish Fund, and Community Legacy, now have one application and time submission. The Smart Growth Subcabinet agencies are also working on an assessment of the Sustainable Communities designation process.
- It was suggested that the State may want to consider providing pre-award earmarking of project funding to establish more predictability for projects (with conceptual designs) that still need final designs completed before project can be fully funded.
- The State can fund mid-market projects that don’t have income restrictions. But, the challenge is there is not enough funding for these types of projects, since federal funds do have income restrictions associated with who can received direct benefit.
- Public outreach and planning funding is needed. Community Legacy no longer provides funding for planning activities.
- “Source of Income” is still a problem that needs to be evaluated.
- Suggest reviewing the recommendations on need to fund pre-development costs; there need to be are more opportunities to address this issue. Several State programs currently place limits on soft costs.
- There is need to better market the wide range of existing reinvestment programs that DHCD offers to local governments and the private sector.
- More consistent reviews and greater predictability on what is required by Maryland Historic Trust is needed when evaluating proposed historic tax credit projects.
- Staff from the Maryland Department of Planning and the Department of Housing & Community Development should continue to develop more technical assistance programs for local governments, particularly those with limited staff resources.
- Program Recommendation #8, “Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) should develop funding and technical assistance resources to assist local governments with the planning, design and implementation of smaller projects, such as key bicycle and pedestrian improvements, for both local and state roads.” MDOT provides some of this now, but they should look to see if enhancements could be made.
- Program Recommendation #9, “The Governor and General Assembly should consider changes to state law to support economic development in targeted areas, including allowing economically distressed municipalities that are not located within economically depressed counties to access the One Maryland Program’s resources.” It was noted that continued investigation of this option should be pursued.

- Program Recommendation #10, “PRO 10. The state and local governments should develop initiatives to foster small business development within targeted areas.” It was noted the list of initiatives seem to be good start.