



**BALTIMORE
METROPOLITAN
COUNCIL**

BUILDING A BETTER REGION TOGETHER

Exploring Public Attitudes on Housing & Transportation

A Regional Qualitative Study

September 2024



Project Team



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Executive Summary

Study Overview

Purpose and Approach

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of public opinions relating to housing, transportation, and development in the Baltimore Region.

Research Goal

This project aims to provide decision-makers and stakeholders with nuanced insights into public opinions on these topics to help shape policy decisions and planning for the future.

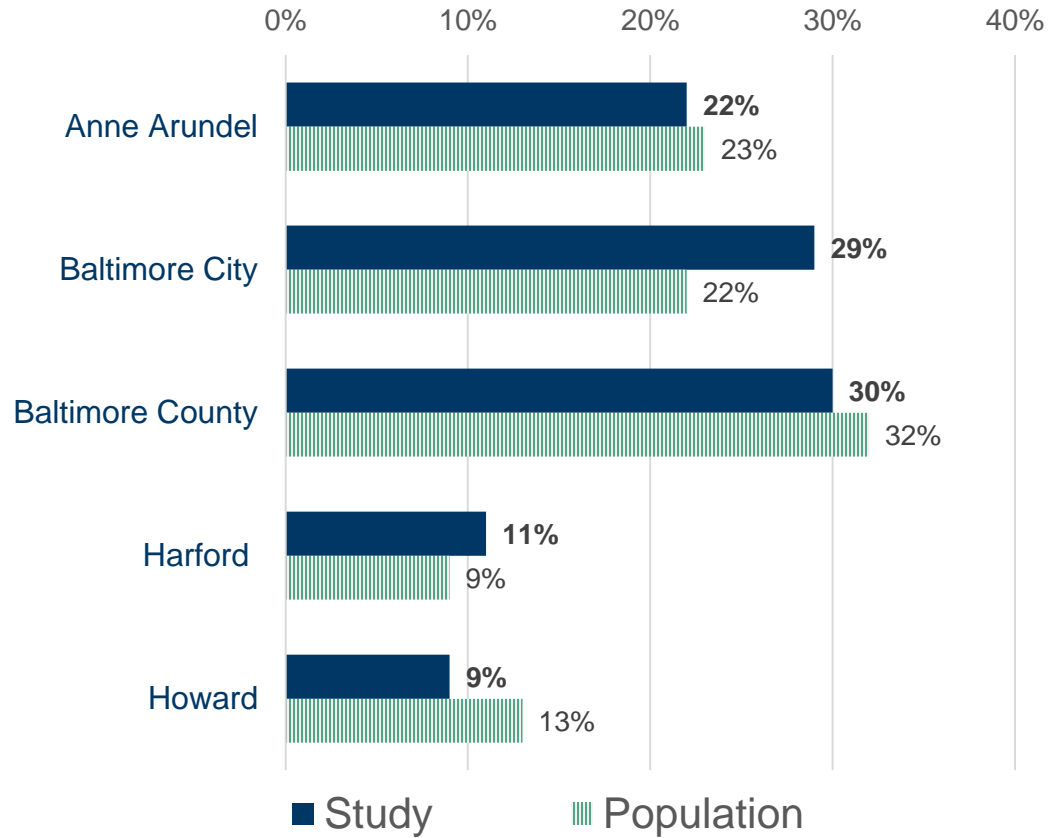
Approach

This project used qualitative research methods to gather in-depth insights from individuals across the region. The project was conducted in multiple phases to ensure these insights were meaningful and fully explored. These phases include:

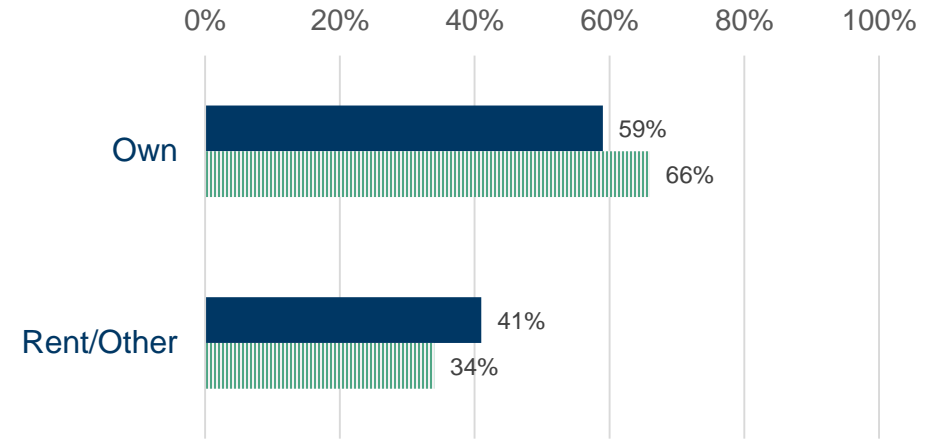
- Regional information gathering (*pre-study phase*)
- Recruitment & screener survey (*pre-study phase*)
- Phase 1: Four-week online qualitative engagement
- Phase 2: Virtual focus groups

Participant Profile

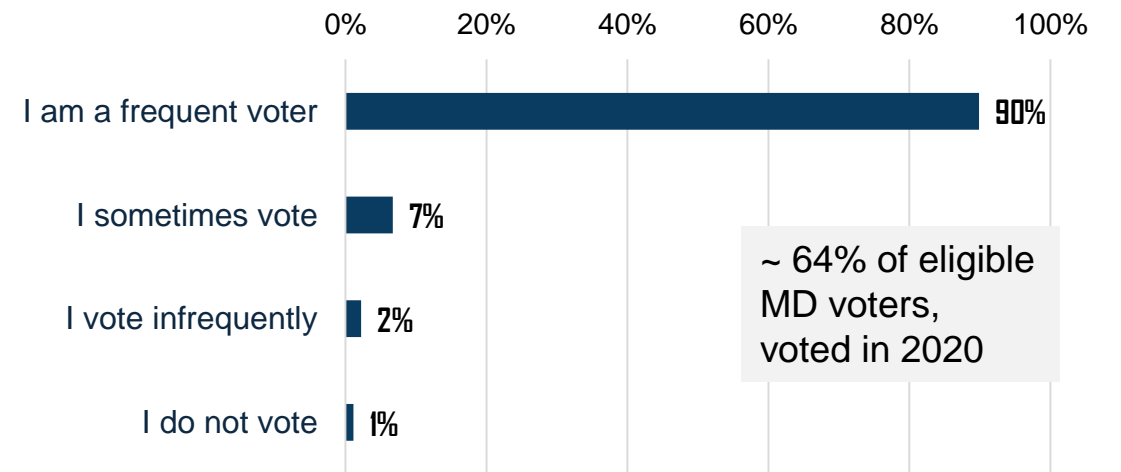
Jurisdictions



Home Owners & Renters

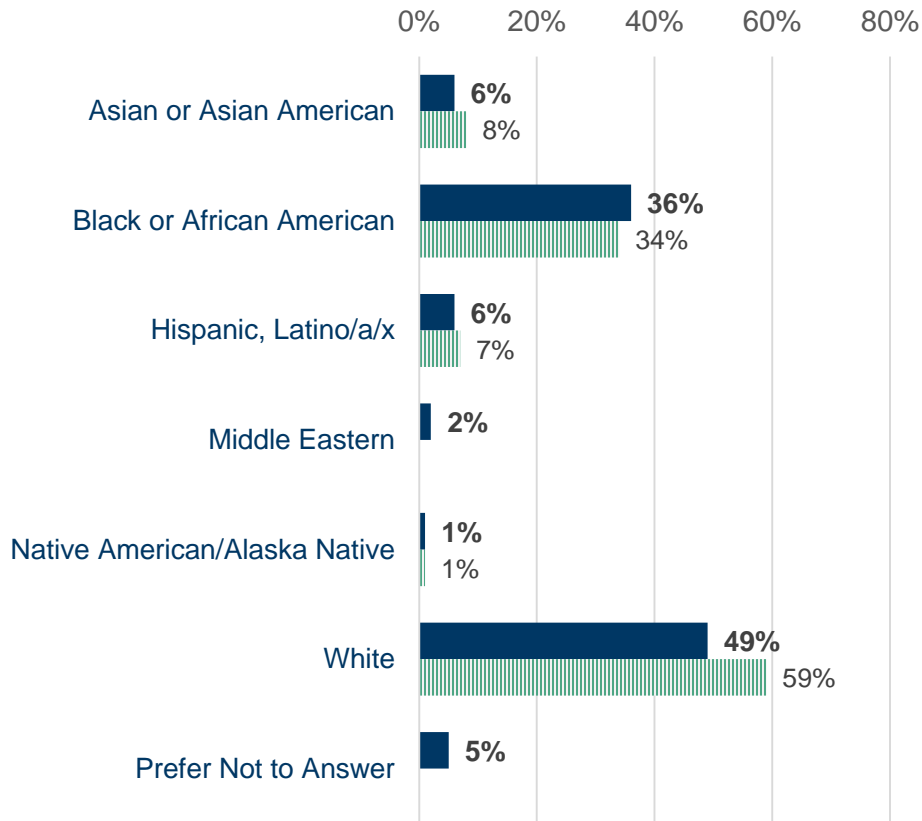


Voter Status

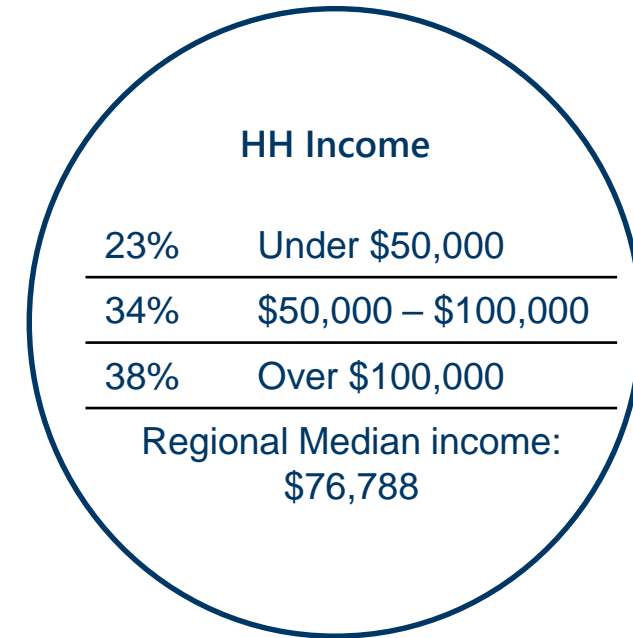
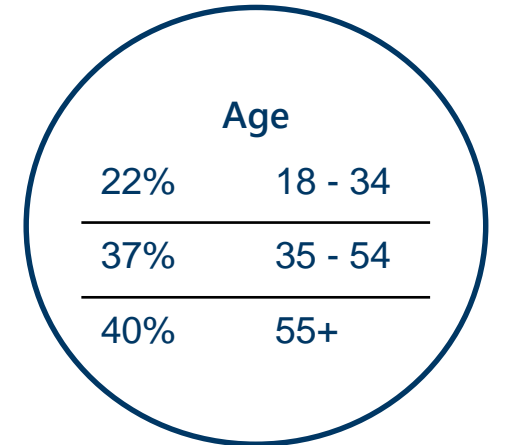
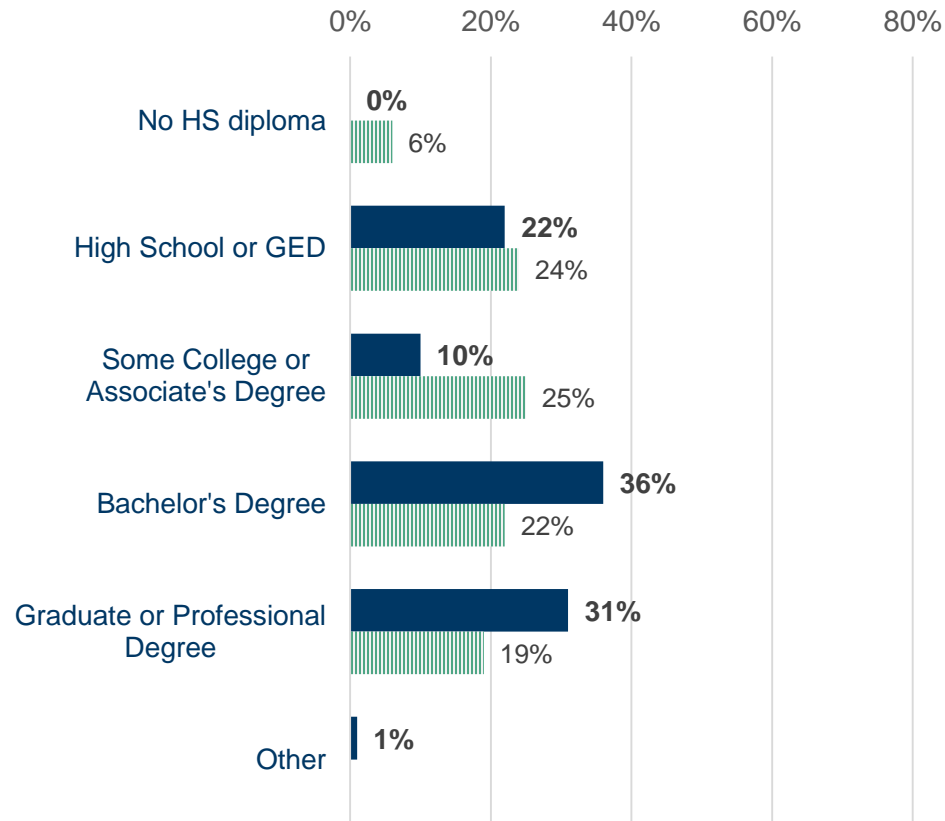


Participant Profile

Race & Ethnicity



Race & Ethnicity



Executive Summary

Key Findings

Key Finding: Cost of living is a concern for most. Almost all see housing costs as a concern.

About 2 in 3 said that rising costs make it difficult to keep up.

“Major issue. Our household income has slightly increased over the last year, but it is harder to afford things. Everyday items like groceries and household supplies take up more of our budget...”

Woman, White, 35-44, Baltimore Co., homeowner

Nearly 90% have struggled to afford housing, know someone who has, or imagine they would be struggling if they were not already housing secure.

“Affordable homes to buy on a public servant's salary are practically nonexistent where I live.”

Woman, White, 55-64, Anne Arundel Co., homeowner

“Affordable housing has and continues to be a problem for myself, others like myself on fixed incomes... Especially for those renting it has become hard to find affordable housing as the rent prices continue to increase and incomes do not automatically adjust to the increases.

Man, Black or African American, 55-64, Baltimore Co., renter

Key Finding: Many recognized limited housing supply as a driver of cost.

Many saw a direct relationship between housing supply and cost.

“Housing stock is low, so prices are high as few people fight over a small number of housing units, particularly desirable ones (smaller single-family homes) in desirable areas (walkable, located close to amenities).”

Woman and Nonbinary, White, 35-44, Anne Arundel Co., homeowner

Some recognized these issues after reading reports and articles about the current state of housing in MD.

“Yes, the WBALTV story. I did not think the housing market was that challenging to buy in currently, but the story made me see that the housing market is not any better since the pandemic.”

Woman, Black or African American, 25-34, Baltimore City, renter



Ultimately, about 75% saw housing supply as a critical issue for the region.

“Yeah, I believe the supply of homes is a serious issue in our area and region and especially affordable homes that middle class people can afford.”

Woman, White, 35-44, Harford Co., living with (a) roommate(s)

Executive Summary

Opportunities

Opportunity: Participants overwhelmingly support rehabbing vacant Baltimore City homes.

Nearly 95% of participants thought rehabbing vacant homes in Baltimore city would improve housing supply and positively impact the region overall.

“I mean, I think as Baltimore rises with these kinds of projects, the whole state benefits from that. It's not, it's, you know, the near term is obviously a very local benefit to Baltimore, but I think the medium term and long term are both good for the whole state.

Man, White, 35-44, Baltimore Co., homeowner



About 70% support committing tax dollars to these efforts.

“I would be willing to support the use of tax dollars provided I new low-income families would occupy these homes.”

Woman, Black or African American, 55-64, Harford Co., homeowner

“These types of efforts absolutely 100 percent need state and federal investment to build America, Baltimore City and my home town... Somebody has to rebuild Maryland beautiful and make people envy Baltimore City.”

Man, Asian or Asian American, 65-74, Anne Arundel Co., homeowner



Opportunity: Many support increasing transit-oriented development efforts.

About 70% supported focusing on transit-oriented opportunities for new housing.

“I love the transit-oriented development; it makes it very convenient for people. It improve housing supply, allows families to cut down on driving and save money to be put in different areas. It stimulates economic activity.”

Woman, Black or African American, 55-64, Baltimore Co., homeowner

Many could envision places in their community where these projects made sense.

“There are several declining local malls in the glen Burnie area that are accessible to light rail and bus routes, Marley Mall and the Cromwell station areas in particular.”

Woman, White, 65-74, Anne Arundel Co., homeowner

“Where I live the area around the train station is not terribly developed, with the influx of warehouse jobs in the area here and in Aberdeen I could see demand increasing around those MARC stations..”

Man, White, 35-44, Harford Co., homeowner



Opportunity: Support for housing in high-opportunity or high-job areas was more mixed.

About 42% thought adding more homes in opportunity areas made sense.

“I think this would be the most ideal area out of all of the areas to live. Safety, good schools and a bunch of local businesses are all ideal things that one thinks of when they decide where they want to live. If I would have a longer life expectancy and my children would have a greater opportunity for success, then I don't see any cons at all.”

Man, White, 35-44, Baltimore City, renter

“Yes, I think areas with good schools and shopping places are ideal for the younger population who wants to raise a family and have the convenience of local shopping—pros for younger couples where they would like to raise their families.”

Woman, White, 55-64, Anne Arundel Co., homeowner

Nearly 46% supported more housing in high-job areas, provided they were attractive places to live.

“It is great to be able to walk to work, and it makes sense to build housing close to jobs, but it depends on other amenities like parks, shops, and schools. I think this would probably be the least desirable of the three areas.”

Woman, White, 65-74, Baltimore City, homeowner

Executive Summary

Considerations & Challenges

Key Finding: High-end development and affordability was a concern that came up across topics.

Many agreed with the narrative that the current market has a “missing middle.”

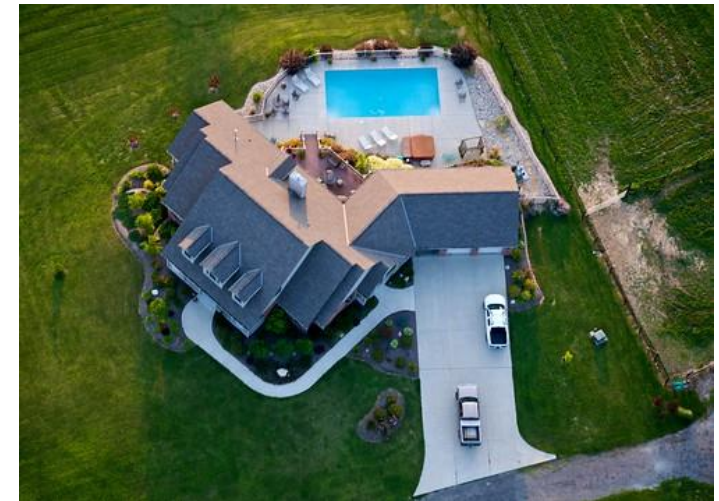
“I’m very fortunate that my rent hasn’t raised much (\$200 over 10 years), and that’s the ONLY reason we’ve been able to save for a down payment. However, many homes on the market are either in need of massive repairs or are sprawling behemoths that cost many times what we can afford.”

Woman, White, 35-44, Baltimore City, renter

A frequent concern was that new homes would also be too expensive to solve affordability issues, especially in high-opportunity areas.

“[Opportunity areas are] the ideal area for me. Safety and schools are most important. The con is that unchecked the price point for these homes can be unaffordable.”

Man, White, 55-64, Harford Co., homeowner



Key Finding: School Overcrowding is a concern for some, but most think it should not restrict housing.

Nearly half said redrawing school boundaries is a fair way to meet housing demand.

"I absolutely believe it is a fair trade-off to re-draw school districts. Increased housing can also improve the local tax base to support schools."

Man, White, 35-44, Baltimore Co., homeowner, children in the household

"There are no lifetime guarantees that school boundaries will not change to meet evolving population needs."

Woman, White, 65-74, Anne Arundel Co., homeowner, no children in the household

Another quarter agreed, with some caveats.

"As long as students currently enrolled in these schools and siblings... are not forced to go to a different school due to redrawing school boundaries."

Woman, White, 35-44, Harford Co., living with (a) roommate(s), children in the household

About 15% did not think redrawing boundaries was fair, many of these were parents.

"If all schools were created equal then I don't imagine most people would have a problem with redrawing school boundaries; however, this is not the case and where kids go to school is a huge factor for families in deciding where to live. I would tread carefully here."

Woman, White, 55-64, Anne Arundel Co., homeowner, children in the household



Key Finding: Traffic and crime did arise as concerns but in limited contexts.

A small number cited crime as a concern, mostly when considering transit-oriented development.

“I am not a fan of these types of developments because I believe that they can invite crime into the communities that they are intended to serve... I would like to see the crime data around those areas compared to areas where transit is not located nearby.”

Woman, White, 75 or older, Howard Co., homeowner



Traffic concerns were directly related to increasing the number of homes; some felt that infrastructure improvements would need to accompany any development.

“Traffic congestion is a serious issue in many areas, and I think it’s because there are high population density with insufficient public transportation options.”

Woman, Black or African American, 25-34, Baltimore City, renter

Executive Summary

Study Recommendations

Recommendation: Relatable examples build understanding and support.

Many were more open to some housing ideas once they'd seen examples.

"These are beautiful! I wonder if White marsh Mall might be adapted in this way. To live close to shops that can be accessed by walking is a great solution. Especially if built where businesses are struggling., It would be a win-win situation for all parties involved."

Woman, White, 65-74, Baltimore Co., homeowner

For me personally, I am enamored with the Greenmount West example (and Upton for that matter! There's so much opportunity further in Sandtown, etc-

Man, White, 35-44, Baltimore Co., living with (a) roommate(s)

Thank you for providing examples! I was worried that the "job center/commercial space" residential proposal would result in low-income residents being forced into industrial zones, with pollution and noise. But these examples are quite nice!

Woman, White, 35-44, Baltimore City, renter



Recommendation: Share information. Many were open and interested to learn more about housing and transit.

Several started looking at homes, jobs, and conditions in their community or discussing housing with friends.

“I did not think the housing market was that challenging to buy in currently, but the story made me see that the housing market is not any better since the pandemic.”

Woman, Black or African American, 25-34, Baltimore City, renter

“The article[s] seemed credible from my experience. Everywhere I go, I see 'help wanted' signs, for all kinds of jobs. But it is expensive to live here because housing costs are so high.”

Woman, White, 65-74, Baltimore City, homeowner

“I agree that lower & middle class workers are leaving the state for cheaper living. Many friends headed south for savings. Many new arrivals from New York, New Jersey and other high housing cost [places] appreciate lower costs here. But they already have high incomes and tend to live in exclusive areas, beyond the current residents affordability.”

Man, Black or African American, 65-74, Baltimore City, living with (a) roommate(s)

“I think a lot about transportation... But looking at options for housing has been thought-provoking. I've lived in my house for over 30 years now, so I have not thought much about other options.”

Woman, White, 65-74, Baltimore City, homeowner



The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Maryland's economic woes predate pandemic, report finds

Comptroller's first-of-its-kind report reveals a lack of affordable housing and child care as partly behind lackluster economic growth

Maryland housing market causing stress for buyers and sellers

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Updated: 12:10 AM EDT Apr 23, 2023

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 Lisa Robinson  Reporter



Recommendation: Demonstrating housing supply constraints opens the door to support for policy solutions

Participants were willing to consider policy initiatives like connecting housing and transit, public investment in Baltimore rehabs, and even rethinking school boundaries.

I think development around transit stations is a great idea and probably the most well-suited for the general area of Harford and Baltimore Counties. I have friends who live in the Woodberry area and they have really enjoyed the new life that has come to their community in the past few years.

Woman, White, 25-34, Harford Co., renter

"I wholeheartedly support funding these efforts through the use of my tax dollars. Investing in projects like these beautifies our neighborhoods and provide residents with safe, clean and affordable housing. I think it's a win-win situation and I would not be upset about a modest tax increase to see the success of projects like these. ."

Woman, Black or African American, 35-44, Baltimore Co., homeowner

"Yes the [school boundary] trade offs are fair because what we have right now is housing prices so high that more and more families are facing housing instability and homelessness, and if we don't build more houses things aren't going to get better."

Woman and Nonbinary, White, 35-44, Anne Arundel Co., homeowner

Inclusionary zoning policies can also help assure the public that more housing supply will include some affordability.

Recommendations: Build a “story of us” – we can make our communities more successful for everyone.

People recognize that our current situation does not set us up for success.

“One thing that’s stuck with me is the widening gap between housing affordability and income levels in many areas. It’s concerning how many people are struggling to find homes within their means.”

Man, Black or African American, 25-34, Baltimore City, homeowner

We CAN address this:

- Already successful efforts in Baltimore City to rehab vacant homes.
- Current attractive examples of transit-oriented development and adding homes to job & commercial centers around the region.

There are challenges – zoning, crowded schools, local opposition, funding – but we can successfully address them with transparency, sensitivity, and a firm focus on the big picture: We need more homes to make our communities, economy, and tax base healthier for all of us.

Questions & Comments

    @BaltoMetroCo  @Baltimore-Metropolitan-Council

