



BUILDING COMMUNITY
TOGETHER

**Testimony SB 387 –
Housing – Community Development Fund Program Act Funding
February 12, 2019
Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Guzzone and the Members of the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee:

The Southwest Partnership Inc. (SWP), a partnership of seven neighborhoods and six anchor institutions in Baltimore, Maryland, urges this committee to vote a favorable report for SB 387 – Housing – Community Development Fund Program Act.

Funding SB 387 creates a permanent funding source for the Community Development Fund which was created during the 2018 legislative session. The funding will establish critical operating dollars to support community development organizations providing affordable housing, neighborhood and commercial revitalization, housing and financial counseling, small business development, community services, and more.

The funding source is from the surplus of the Unclaimed Property Fund and would allocate five million dollars annually to the Community Development Fund

The Southwest Partnership Inc. is implementing a revitalization plan for our seven neighborhoods. The activities of the SWP include: reclaiming vacant properties for residential and commercial development, creating safe and vibrant streets, building stronger schools, preserving the fabric and history of the community and establishing a network of employment training and employment opportunities for the residents of the community.

Listed below is a sample of work being done in its four and half years of existence. The SWP has and is:

- Created homeownership zones in three of its neighborhoods: in phase one, purchasing 21 vacant houses and working with small developers and general contractors renovating these buildings for homeownership opportunities for working families, phase two currently in acquisition will include 36 vacant buildings and phase three over 50 vacant buildings.

- Developed a master plan for the redevelopment of the old West Baltimore Street retail corridor. Attached is a brief power point presentation showing the physical development activity that has been generated which will lead to resurgence of this once thriving district. In the 1500 block of W Baltimore St alone over nine million dollars of development activity has been committed and is in the early stages of construction.
- Reduced the incidences of street crime by reclaiming unused alleys and walkways, turning them into secure spaces where residents can safely use the space for their own benefit.
- Managing three community school efforts and coordinating with four others to ensure that there are quality educational programs in the community.
- Reclaiming a vacant recreation center that will provide after school and summer activities for the young people in the community, over four hundred thousand dollars has been raised through the faith community to support the necessary renovation work.

The reality is that without the stakeholders of this community coming together and creating both the Vision Plan for a revitalized community and the organization to manage and facilitate the work, there would be little if any of this work being accomplished in the seven neighborhoods.

SWP is creating a market for future development. This development will create healthy communities where there has been primarily disinvestment over the past four generations. This development is creating opportunities for growth. And this growth will create financial returns for the City and the State while eliminating some of the financial demands on the local jurisdiction.

Unfortunately, too many hours of volunteer and staff time are spent securing the operating funds needed to keep the SWP alive and well.

The Community Development Fund will help balance the time spent between raising operating funds and actually doing the development work.

Please vote a favorable report for SB 387

Respectfully Submitted,



Michael V. Seipp
Executive Director