

COMMUNITY CONTROL OF LAND

One-Pager
March 2021

Summary

Black Yield Institute & Farm Alliance of Baltimore co-led a community-driven political process of facilitated virtual conversations and teach-ins in October 2020. This process was designed to engage community members in defining major issues and proposing solutions to the issue of community land insecurity. The aim is to develop a community self-determined proposal with a broad base of support among Baltimore City residents to help define policy implications within the City of Baltimore.

Methodology

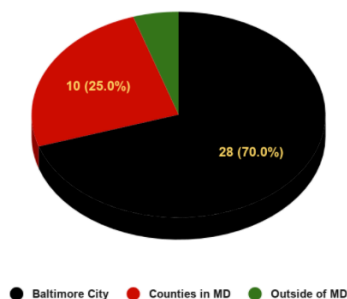
Approaches to Outreach:

- Community Listservs/Newsletters
- Social Media
- Word of Mouth
- Personal Emails

Number of Conversations: 11

- 1 Preliminary Community Dialogue
- 1 Teach-in
- 9- Community Conversations

Community Control of Land Community Conversations
Attendee Demographic Breakdown by Location



Teach-In Overview

Recruitment of Experts: Black Yield Institute recruited four experts from people's movements in Oakland, Washington DC, Philadelphia, and Detroit who have won victories on community control of land. These experts were invited to share learnings from their specific experiences in a single 90 minute public conversation with Baltimore City residents. As the goal was to use these experts' expertise to inform our community conversations, the Teach-in was held before the facilitated community conversations.

Recruitment and Outreach for Attendees: Farm Alliance of Baltimore and Black Yield Institute ran a joint communications campaign to publicize the aforementioned teach-in, which took place October 6, 2020. Farm Alliance of Baltimore collected contact information and communicated directly with those registering for the event, and prepared a virtual space for holding and recording the event. Attendees were then re-contacted for participation in the community conversations.

"The people that are most affected by decisions [around land ownership] should be able to make those decisions, and the people who [experience] the most consequence, or benefit, or impact from resources should be able to control those resources."

- T., Baltimore



Community Perspectives on Land Use

- ◇ There is strong interest in growing food, livestock, and fibers within Baltimore City.
- ◇ Access to arable land is a human right and existing de jure and de facto limitations on community control of land represent a violation of this right.
- ◇ Access to arable land will open opportunities for a multitude of community benefits, including economic stimulation, public health improvements, crime reduction, and environmental stewardship
- ◇ City government should be accountable for protecting community land from speculation and predatory development
- ◇ A coalition network of community actors (organizations and individuals) across the city neighborhoods must work together to insure land protection, share knowledge, tangible resources and produce, and share capital.
- ◇ City and DPW must make water, sanitation, services easily accessible and affordable.

“Baltimore does this thing that I’ve coined ‘civic share-cropping.’ It asks or cajoles, or demands Black and Brown communities to do things that the City should be doing with our tax dollars...folks should be getting paid for their time and their ingenuity.”
- N. N., Baltimore

Reparatory Policy Demands

1. Land Transfer and Control: Baltimore City owned land, especially land obtained through mortgage default or seizure should be given to communities for free OR sold to communities at a greatly discounted rate.

- ◇ Every neighborhood in the city must have access to at least one or two acres of arable land.
- ◇ Renting/leasing is not a viable way to transfer land to communities. The transfer of land title must be permanent and legally protected from later seizure or development.

2. Deeding the land isn’t enough: Baltimore City and community must build legal and policy structures to support and protect community land control from predatory capitalism.

- ◇ Lasting legislative change must protect community controlled land that cannot change with newly elected administrations.

3. City proposal, BYI/FAB presentations, and future plans must be flexible regarding how community control of land works from neighborhood to neighborhood:

- ◇ Not all communities will be interested in using repatriated land for agriculture. We must recognize other ideas, like parks, green spaces, or affordable housing as valid uses of land. Community desires/needs should be put first.
- ◇ It may take some communities time to develop interest or plans for a space, so we should reject profit/time based measurements of success when determining who stewards the land.
- ◇ Policies should be flexible enough to accommodate multiple land control styles.
- ◇ Policies should be sensitive in identifying and prioritizing those communities with the greatest need for the opportunities communal land access creates