MISSION AND HISTORY

As a public university and one of Baltimore’s most powerful anchor institutions, the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) is dedicated to improving health, creating wealth, and advancing social justice in the neighborhoods nearest our campus. Every aspect of the University’s work in the community is shaped by its core mission: *To improve the human condition and serve the public good.*

In fall 2015, under the leadership of UMB President Jay A. Perman, MD, the University opened our **Community Engagement Center (CEC)** in West Baltimore’s Poppleton neighborhood. The temporary facility has enlivened UMB’s community engagement mission and deepened our relationship with our closest neighbors. The center engages hundreds of students, faculty, and staff from all seven UMB schools to provide vital health, wellness, employment, education, and social services to nearby residents, and effectively partners with neighbors to create and sustain projects that strengthen community development and invite external investment.

The CEC primarily serves 6,500 households living in the communities that make up the Southwest Partnership coalition: Franklin Square, Poppleton, Hollins Market, Barre Circle, Pigtown, Mount Clare, and Union Square. Visitors also come from many other West Baltimore neighborhoods.
A NEW HOME AND A BRIGHT FUTURE

At the cornerstone of UMB’s Community Campus is the new permanent home of the Community Engagement Center (CEC), a 20,000-square-foot historic building on South Poppleton Street in need of complete renovation. Bringing this beautiful, distinctive property back to a useful life will significantly expand the CEC’s capacity, making possible additional youth programming, workforce development support, health education, and social work assistance services. With a CEC seven times its current size, we can provide on-site spaces for our community partners, including the United Way of Central Maryland.

This new facility will include spaces and amenities that our neighbors have been asking for: an exercise/dance studio, a large multipurpose room for community meals and events, a safe play area for children, a wellness suite, and a more robust computer lab. The facility will include space for food market programs and a kitchen where residents can learn healthy cooking techniques and where CEC staff, partners, and vendors can prepare food on-site for school groups and events.

The center also will have private consultation spaces where residents can take advantage of discreet legal and health counseling, and a “family room” where group counseling sessions for families will be led by licensed clinical social workers and social work students.

The larger facility will allow for the expansion of the Police Athletic/Activities League (PAL) program—to serve more young people; bring a mini-makers space into the West Baltimore community; and create additional social and mental health support services and family resources.

The new UMB Student Health Alliance will provide preventive health education to community members relative to the major health issues in West Baltimore including: asthma, hypertension, diabetes, and mental health. Nearly 275 UMB students have elected to take advantage of the opportunities offered at the CEC to train in their chosen discipline.

Expanding these opportunities will facilitate UMB’s training of the next generation of human services professionals as they develop and refine the interprofessional skills they need to become competent, compassionate, and civically engaged practitioners.
REAL AND LASTING CHANGE

Since opening in 2015, the UMB Community Engagement Center has joined with neighbors and partners to build a healthy and prosperous West Baltimore where residents have opportunity to achieve their goals and thrive. Key programs and accomplishments include:

Community Markets and Meals served more than 250 shoppers in 2018 and recorded more than $16,000 spent at the Hungry Harvest Produce in a SNAP! Market since April 2017. As many as 120 neighbors gather on final Fridays of the month to share a community meal catered by a local, independently owned business from West Baltimore.

Sharing a meal together at a common space can help to decrease social isolation; in fact, in the final community meal of 2018, almost all the attendees reported that they attend the meal to meet new people and visit with neighbors.

JustAdvice Legal Clinic offers residents assistance with legal matters from University of Maryland Carey School of Law students. The clinic has provided legal advice to nearly 400 city residents, saving community members approximately $62,250 in legal fees.

Workforce Wednesdays provides community job seekers with employment advice and assists them in navigating the UMB and University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) hiring process. Since its inception, some 375 people have been assisted with résumé creation, cover letters, and mock employment interviews; 112 have achieved employment.

The CEC has served as a Summer Job Site for nearly 40 youth in West Baltimore during the past three years, seven of whom returned for more than one summer. Half of the most recent summer cohort are currently employed by the Pop! Farm Fellows program with a living wage stipend during the school year.

PAL, the UMB Police Athletic/Activities League, is an after-school program recently expanded to five days a week serving elementary and middle school students from nearby schools, primarily James McHenry Elementary/Middle School. One of just two PAL programs in the U.S. offered at a university, it provides nearly 30 young boys and girls the unique opportunity to improve their self-esteem, academic performance, and social skills through field trips, community service, sports, and art activities with UMB police officers.

After the first year of PAL almost all of the participants reported feeling more likely to talk to an adult about a problem they cannot solve by themselves, feeling more connected to the community, and having an improved outlook for the future. One student reported that he saw himself being better in school, “last year I was bad, but this year I improved on what I am supposed to do.” Another noted he “felt safe in the Community Engagement Center.” The majority of young people had greater respect for law enforcement officers, a significant achievement in West Baltimore.

Computer Access is free and available to many residents on a daily basis, enabling visitors to print, scan, and send documents, take online courses, research job opportunities, pay bills online, and check email as well as social media.

Health and Fitness classes are offered throughout the week for people of all ages and abilities including yoga, line dancing, Zumba, and martial arts.

After being diagnosed with stage 3 hypertension, one participant vowed to lower her blood pressure by increasing her physical activity. After exercising at the center twice a week for four months, she lowered her numbers dramatically. She checked her progress with the help of students from the School of Medicine and a community health worker from the University of Maryland Medical Center who joined neighbors before class to help them monitor their blood pressure and weight, supporting women and men in their health goals.
Partnerships are fostered in our Community Space, where nonprofit partners as well as resident-led and UMB-initiated events are held that are free of charge and open to the public. In spring 2018, the popular Taking Care of Our Own series included health and safety workshops led by presenters from 12 local community-based organizations, nonprofits, and city agencies. In spring 2019, the series featured relaxation techniques led by integrative health practitioners who are trained in trauma-informed care. In total, nearly 250 people have been trained in life-saving emergency response skills such as CPR/First Aid/AED, Stop the Bleed, Naloxone, Bystander Intervention, and Mental Health First Aid.

**THE CHALLENGES IN WEST BALTIMORE**

West Baltimore residents have formed strong community associations to help each other in times of need throughout their lives, whether those needs are overcoming barriers to health, safety, shelter, or opportunity.

The UMB Community Engagement Center seeks to enhance these efforts by partnering with existing neighborhood associations and community residents to create and sustain projects that strengthen community development, promote civic engagement, and invite external investment.

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

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<tr>
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<th>Percentage of population (ages 25+ with at least a high school diploma or GED)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poppleton &amp; Hollins Market</td>
<td>69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
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**CHILDREN IN POVERTY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Percentage of children living below the poverty line</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poppleton &amp; Hollins Market</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
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**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

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<th>Median household income</th>
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<tr>
<td>Poppleton &amp; Hollins Market</td>
<td>$18,755</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>$42,241</td>
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**LIFE EXPECTANCY, IN YEARS**

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Poppleton &amp; Hollins Market</td>
<td>68.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>73.6</td>
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Source: Vital Signs 15, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance – Jacob France Institute, 2015

**PHILANTHROPY – A POWERFUL RESOURCE**

Our shared vision is to renovate the new Community Engagement Center and empower the overall Community Campus by working within existing community associations and with the people of West Baltimore to meet their greatest needs. Through the expertise and passion of students, faculty, staff, and friends who engage meaningfully with neighbors, UMB envisions a cohesive and collaborative partnership among the University, our West Baltimore neighbors, and community partners.

Generous philanthropic partnership will be crucial in achieving this ambitious vision. UMB seeks committed collaborators who aspire to help transform the lives of children and families in one of Baltimore’s most challenged, yet resilient communities.

Our goal is to generate substantial charitable investment to establish a philanthropic infrastructure that will facilitate future financial security, allowing the CEC to serve at its optimal potential and achieve the greatest positive impact. This objective entails endowing the CEC so it can function in perpetuity and evolve as a stable member of the community.

We invite your partnership in and commitment to this meaningful venture and sincerely hope you will join the growing number of UMB Community Campus benefactors.
As UMB’s ambitious plans to open a vibrant, new Community Engagement Center (CEC) in 2020 become a reality, we invite you to share in our vision for what the UMB CEC can do for the West Baltimore community. To help us see this vision fulfilled, we are seeking philanthropic partners deeply committed to transforming the lives of children and families in one of Baltimore’s most vulnerable neighborhoods.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact

Thomas J. Sullivan, CFRE, MS
UMB Chief Philanthropy Officer and Vice President
410-706-8489 or thomas.sullivan@umaryland.edu

For more information regarding UMB’s community engagement programs, services, and initiatives, please contact:

Ashley Valis, MSW
Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives and Community Engagement
410-706-5179 or avalis@umaryland.edu

University of Maryland, Baltimore
Office of Community Engagement
220 North Arch Street, Baltimore, MD 21201
umaryland.edu/oce