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EBDI and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) To Demolish Vacant Properties in the Northwest Area of Eager Park.

On January 13, 2020 at 10:30 a.m., East Baltimore Development, Inc. (EBDI), joined by Maryland Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, Baltimore Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Kenneth Holt, local and state elected officials and longtime partners, announced a significant milestone in the ongoing revitalization of East Baltimore’s Middle East neighborhood. With State of Maryland funding from Project C.O.R.E. (Creating Opportunities for Renewal and Enterprise), EBDI will demolish the last cluster of unoccupied and blighted residential buildings located in the northwest sector of its 88-acre footprint. This demolition project will clear land to make way for more affordable and market rate, for-sale and rental housing.

The East Baltimore Development Initiative is a 20-year, $1.8 billion mixed-use revitalization project funded by city, state and federal agencies, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and other philanthropies, Johns Hopkins University and Medicine and private business owners. Once completed, the initiative will include 1.6 million square feet of commercial laboratory and office space, 1,600 affordable and market-rate housing units, a growing neighborhood school and early childhood center, 150,000 square feet of retail space, a five-acre park, and a hotel. Since 2004, the private and public sectors have invested nearly $1.1 billion within the neighborhood.

Now called Eager Park, the Middle East neighborhood of East Baltimore was once a stable, middle-income community comprised of sturdy brick row homes, shops, restaurants, movie theaters, viable schools and libraries. Beginning in the 1960s, Middle East experienced rapid decline due to a massive loss of nearby industrial jobs, civil unrest, a growing drug and crime epidemic, redlining and suburbanization. At its lowest point, in 2001, an estimated 70 percent of the housing stock in Middle East was vacant and median home values hovered between $30,000 and $40,000, less than half of the median value of homes in Baltimore as a whole.

Since EBDI’s inception in 2002, nearly 1,000 vacant units have been demolished in a balanced demolition and restoration approach that has created land for new housing, office/lab space, the school and the park, while preserving close to 200 row homes. To date, there are almost 750
occupied houses and apartments within the Eager Park neighborhood, more than the 740 occupied properties that existed when the project began. This number will increase as EBDI is managing four active residential projects that will bring almost 500 new affordable and market-rate homes and apartments to Eager Park by 2023.

“The Hogan-Rutherford administration is proud to support EBDI activities and projects across the city, with the Department of Housing and Community Development investing over $4 million in total funding since 2015, including a Project C.O.R.E. award of $500,000 in Fiscal Year 2018 specifically for this Northwest Development Project,” said Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford. “By clearing these lots and providing this area with market and affordable townhomes, the Northwest Demolition Project will positively impact the revitalization of East Baltimore, enhance the value of adjacent communities, and lay the foundation for future development by attracting additional investment and development.”

“I am incredibly proud of the progress that has occurred in EBDI’s footprint in this beautiful and thriving neighborhood in East Baltimore,” Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young said. There has been a great deal of collaboration and support to help get us to this day and we should all take a moment and appreciate the removal of blighted blocks that are being replaced with state-of-the-art affordable and market-rate units. I can’t wait to welcome the residents to their new homes and neighborhood.”

An original partner in Eager Park, the Johns Hopkins Institutions have helped create a robust Eager Park housing market through its Live Near Your Work initiative by offering closing costs and down payment grants to its employees who buy a house in the neighborhood. “It is exciting to see the progress continue with these efforts to advance economic development and increase access to affordable housing in East Baltimore,” said Kevin W. Sowers, president of the Johns Hopkins Health System and executive vice president of Johns Hopkins Medicine.

“EBDI will continue to ensure fidelity to its original commitment to ‘responsible redevelopment,’ investment in human, economic and physical development, in that order,” said Cheryl Washington, president and chief executive officer of EBDI.” Said Washington, “We can never lose sight, nor will the community ever let us, of EBDI’s core values, which include a brand-new initiative to help displaced residents to buy homes in Eager Park.” EBDI’s inclusion policies, which will be applied to this project, ensure inclusion for local, minority and women businesses and for local workers.