

Essex Business Retention & Recruitment Plan

Final Presentation

Funding for this initiative provided by



Essex
Community
Development
Corporation



Agenda

- I. Welcome (Chrissy)
- II. Essex Development Initiative Year in Review (Chrissy)
- III. Project Overview (Camoin)
- IV. Strategy Framework and Walkthrough (Camoin)
- V. Implementation Discussion (Camoin)



Essex Development Initiative: Year in Review

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Project Overview

**Essex
Community
Development
Corporation**



Today's Goals

1. Recap the process that yielded the strategies we will discuss today.
2. Confirm consensus on strategy direction.
3. Articulate where you can see yourselves providing future guidance and supporting Business Retention & Recruitment Plan implementation.

Camoin's Scope

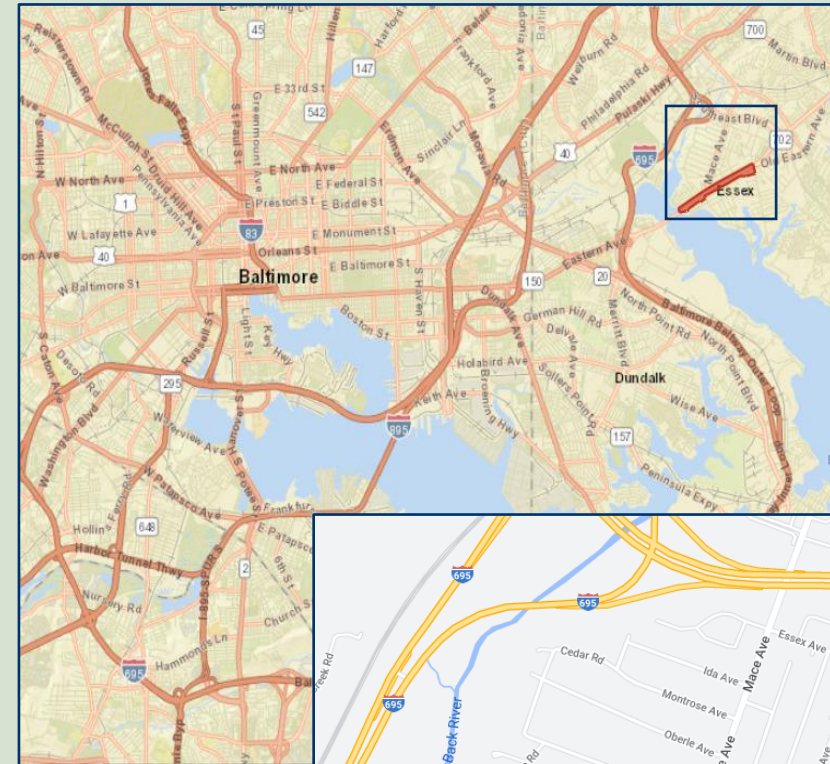
- Market Analysis
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Business Retention & Recruitment Plan

The Boulevard in Essex

The Boulevard in Essex ("The Boulevard") extends 1.3 miles along Eastern Boulevard from the Back River bridge to South Marlyn Avenue.

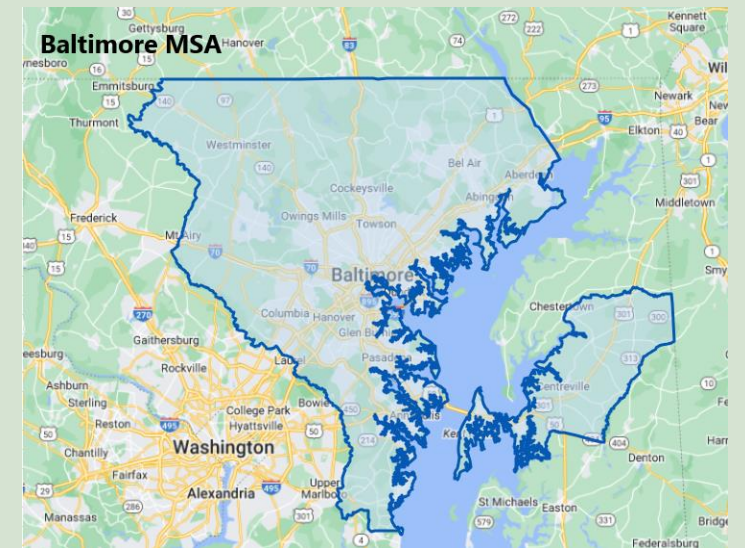
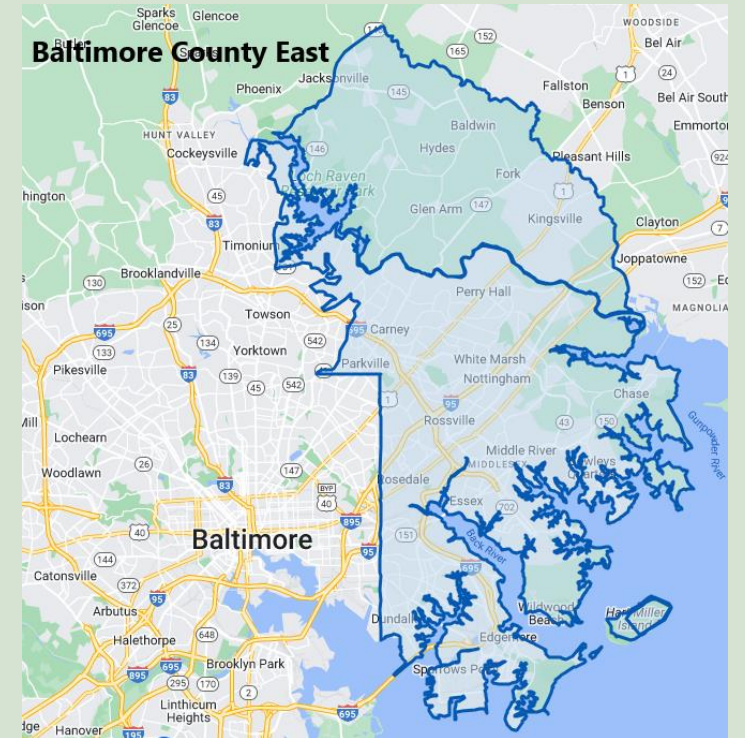
Characteristics:

- Includes all retailers, service providers, and other businesses abutting this route.
- Home to mostly small businesses in one-to-two story buildings.
- Has four traffic lanes with minimal designated pedestrian crosswalks and a speed limit of 30 mph. Existing crosswalks are at the intersections of Virginia Ave, Riverside Dr., and Taylor Ave.
- Abuts the Back River, which opens to the Chesapeake Bay. Waterfront access in the broader area around the corridor is predominantly residential.
- No direct park access, and landscaping is limited to sidewalk planters, shrubbery along some of the larger commercial developments, and an Essex sculpture at the southernmost part of the corridor.



Comparison Geographies

- To provide a reference for comparison, measures of retail market activity for The Boulevard are compared against more broad geographies.
- Inclusive of Essex, the **Baltimore County East** area captures market activity centered around The Boulevard and beyond. This provides a benchmark with which we can compare the corridor.
- The **Baltimore Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)** serves as the broadest geographic reach, extending north to Pennsylvania, east to Delaware, and southwest to Washington DC.



Work Completed

Market Data Analysis

- Retail Real Estate Market Trends
- Economic and Market Context
- Eastern Blvd Business Inventory
- Retail Trade Areas
- Market Area Demographics and Consumer Profiles
- Retail Gap Analysis

Business Engagement

- Business Walks on Eastern Blvd (12 visited)
- Business Roundtable (8 attendees)
- Business Engagement Survey (8 respondents)

Public Sector and Community Engagement

- Focus Groups (19 attendees)
- Community Pulse Survey (81 respondents)
- Interviews (scheduling in process)

Strategy Workshop

- Present the results of the market analysis
- Finalize market opportunities and priorities
- Develop initial ideas and priorities for the recruitment and retention plan

Data Findings

The market analysis identified several potential opportunities for business attraction. In addition to the retail gaps listed on the previous page, other opportunities include:

- 1. Food and Entertainment.** Examples – fast casual restaurant, limited-service restaurant(s) (café, coffee shop, grab-and-go items), full-service restaurant(s) (midscale, family-friendly), additional bars/night entertainment (more limited opportunity).
- 2. Additional Small-Scale Retail.** Examples – neighborhood/commuter convenience retail, pet care, antiques, and used goods.
- 3. Fitness/Wellness.** Examples – small gym/fitness facility/indoor sports, fitness/sports retail (potentially combined with above; potential water recreation focus), medical office (outpatient/medical clinic/neighborhood serving).
- 4. Mixed Use.** Examples – retail and housing mixed use, hybrid businesses (can include medical office, small retail, apartments).

Data sources include: CoStar, Data Axle, Demandbase, Esri, Foursquare, Lightcast

Data Findings

1. Based on current conditions and data, there are a number of retail “gaps” in Essex given local consumer spending patterns:
 - Limited-Service Restaurants
 - Full-Service Restaurants
 - Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores
 - Clothing and Clothing Accessories
 - Snack and Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars
 - Pharmacies
2. The Boulevard, and Essex as a whole, is primarily a convenience goods and services center for local households.
3. The Boulevard sees heavy traffic volumes suggesting existing and new spending potential from those passing through the corridor.
4. The existing commercial real estate along The Boulevard is primarily older, low-density, and relatively smaller stock.
5. Spaces along The Boulevard are predominantly used for retail, and there is relatively little commercial office space.

Data Findings

6. The Boulevard is generally built-out and there has been little development or redevelopment activity in recent years.
7. Retail market trends show signs of recent strengthening.
8. The current office market is relatively weak, and high office vacancy levels are consistent with national trends in the office market post-COVID.
9. Retail and office rental rates lower along The Boulevard compared to other parts of the Baltimore metro area.
10. The primary Retail Trade Area consumer base is relatively stable, but projections show zero or negative growth potential in households.
11. The primary consumer base for businesses along The Boulevard skews older and lower-income – which presents both challenges and opportunities.

Business Walk Takeaways

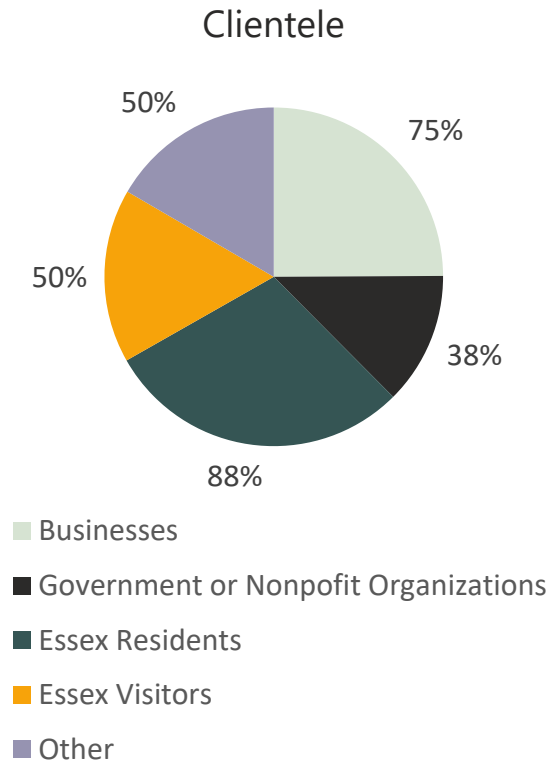
- **New Businesses.** Camoin spoke to several new businesses that opened in the last nine months.
 - Includes Dulce Panaderia y Café, Fade City Barber Shop, La Villita, and Ramos Latin Market.
- **Regulations and Permitting.** Businesses could use support navigating regulations and permitting. In some cases, it took businesses 1-3 years to open.
- **Relationship Building.** Essex CDC and Chamber can continue building relationships with Hispanic and Latino business owners in various ways:
 - Emphasize that the goal is to provide information on programs and certifications to support their business growth.
 - Engage a Spanish interpreter will help with continued relationship building.

Focus Group and Roundtable Takeaways

- **Regulations and Permitting.** Permitting process is long and confusing.
- **Expensive Property Development and Redevelopment.** It is expensive to demo and renovate properties.
 - Essex has many property owners.
 - Owners hold out at high prices even if property has infrastructure issues.
- **County Disconnect.** Baltimore County has many services to support businesses, but they do not always reach small businesses.
 - Point of contact is unclear.
 - Difficult for County to maintain institutional knowledge of Eastern Baltimore County, but local realtors can help market Essex.

Business Engagement Survey Findings

- There were a total of 8 respondents.
- 75% of respondents have been in Essex for 6+ years.
- 100% of respondents had 1-19 employees.



Business Engagement Survey Findings

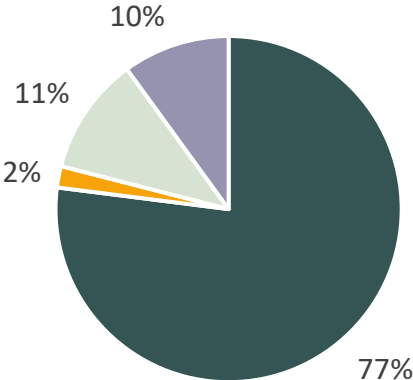
Other takeaways:

- For most businesses, workforce and revenue have stayed relatively the same during the last 12 months.
- 75% of respondents plan on growing their business in the next 12 months.
- Employee Recruitment, Digital Marketing, and Capital Improvements were the top three types of assistance requested to grow and expand business.
- There is a perception of committed business owners but an uninviting built environment due to crime and deteriorating buildings.
- Four of the eight respondents would like to connect with the Chamber.

Community Pulse Survey Findings

- 81 respondents
- 22% of respondents mentioned running a business out of their home (administrative services, apparel, baking, crafts, etc.)

Home and Workplace of Respondents



- I live in Essex
- I work in Essex
- I live and work in Essex
- I neither live nor work in Essex

Describe the businesses and/or amenities you would like to see along Eastern Blvd:



Market Opportunity Uses

Business Recruitment

1. Food and Entertainment (Destination plus locally serving)

- Fast casual restaurant (may require mixed-use development to be feasible)
- Limited-service restaurant(s) (café, coffee shop, grab-and-go items)
- Full-service restaurant (midscale, family-friendly)
- Additional bars/night entertainment (more limited opportunity)

Eden Center | Falls Church, VA

“Since 1984, Eden Center has been a home to more than 120 family-owned restaurants, shops, supermarkets, jewelry stores and travel agents catering to the Asian American population. The center is perfect for all ages and nationalities looking for authentic Vietnamese dishes and specialties.”



Market Opportunity Uses

Business Recruitment

2. Small-Scale Retail

- Neighborhood/commuter convenience retail
- Pet care
- Antiques and used goods

Seawall | Old Market Barbers | Baltimore, MD

"Old Market Barbers, which occupies one of the rezoned corner commercial properties" in the Remington neighborhood of Baltimore City.



Market Opportunity Uses

Business Recruitment

3. Fitness/Wellness

- Small gym/fitness facility/indoor sports
- Fitness/sports retail (potentially combined with above; potential water recreation focus)
- Medical office (outpatient/medical clinic/neighborhood serving)



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YouFit Gyms | Randallstown, MD



Market Opportunity Uses

Business Recruitment

4. Mixed Use

- Retail and housing mixed use
- Hybrid businesses – can include medical office, small retail, apartments



MacKenzie Commercial Real Estate | Village Center at Stadium Place | Baltimore, MD

"This vibrantly designed four-story building will contain medical office and retail space, as well as 70 age-restricted apartments (62+)."

Priorities from Strategy Workshop

Three priority outcomes to guide business retention and recruitment efforts along Eastern Blvd and the surrounding area:

Food Destination

A **food destination**, with a “food hub” (a cluster of food establishments and potentially a commercial kitchen as its anchor) that serves residents and workers while drawing visitors to the Eastern Blvd corridor.

Essex-Based Business Navigator

An **Essex-based business navigator** to serve as the face for business support service.

Mixed-Use Development

A **mixed-use development** along Eastern Blvd to increase housing stock while attracting tenants from industries that the local market can support (e.g., medical office and convenience retail).

Strategy Framework and Walkthrough

***Break for 10 minutes**

Strategy Snapshot

Timeline	Strategy
<p>Phase I:</p> <p>Set the stage for retention and recruitment efforts (Year 1-2)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in a <u>customer relationship management tool</u> to support a BRE program and property inventory. 2. Share <u>publicly available resources</u> for current and prospective business owners. 3. Pursue <u>public-private partnerships</u> to redevelop sites and advance future business retention and recruitment.
<p>Phase II:</p> <p>Launch business programs and marketing initiatives (Year 2-3)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Assemble a <u>Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program</u>. 5. Prepare a <u>recruitment campaign</u> to attract businesses in target industries. 6. Develop a <u>brand and placemaking</u> effort to showcase The Boulevard’s food scene. 7. Solicit <u>development proposals from private sector developers</u> for a mixed-use project at the Park & Ride site.
<p>Phase III:</p> <p>Implement business recruitment campaign, food hub, and mixed-use development project (Year 3+)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Partner with Baltimore County to launch a <u>targeted business recruitment campaign</u>. 9. Leverage <u>local media</u> to spotlight the Essex business community. 10. Formalize a <u>food hub, culinary incubator, and shared commercial kitchen</u>.

Strategy Snapshot by Phase

Timeline	Strategy
<p>Phase I:</p> <p>Set the stage for retention and recruitment efforts (Year 1-2)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Invest in a <u>customer relationship management tool</u> to support a BRE program and property inventory.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) Capture all businesses, contacts, and outreach activity for the Essex Development Initiative.b) Develop a small business list to be efficient and strategic with outreach.c) Create and maintain a commercial space inventory to provide a current listing of available commercial spaces and properties along The Boulevard and serve as a primary recruitment tool for engaging desired businesses. 2. Share <u>publicly available resources</u> for current and prospective business owners.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) Create an inventory of state and local business incentives and grant programs to support retail and food establishments.b) Create a calendar that consolidates in-person and virtual business service events in one place to expand technical assistance to current and prospective business owners in Essex.c) Develop a comprehensive packet that consolidates resources for business owners. Make this available in digital and print form. 3. Pursue <u>public-private partnerships</u> to redevelop sites and advance future business retention and recruitment.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) Articulate a vision for a food hub to guide retention and expansion efforts for food establishments along The Boulevard.b) Engage County leadership to demonstrate the importance of property development and support, particularly around a mixed-use development at the Park & Ride site.c) Prepare a Feasibility Study for a mixed-use development of the Park & Ride site and, if appropriate, a culinary incubator with shared commercial kitchen space. The study can include considerations such as an overlay district and County regulations.d) Assess feasibility of creating new County incentive programs to support The Boulevard’s commercial property owners and restaurants.

Strategy Snapshot by Phase

Timeline	Strategy
<p>Phase II:</p> <p>Launch business programs and marketing initiatives (Year 2-3)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Assemble a <u>Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program</u>. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Locate BRE team at a site on or near The Boulevard to make technical assistance services more accessible to current and potential business owners. b) Formalize an engagement process with The Boulevard’s businesses to connect more owners with technical assistance, grants, and other resources. 5. Prepare a <u>recruitment campaign</u> to attract businesses in target industries. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Launch grants, incentives, and/or other County and State programs to commercial property owners and businesses to incentivize opening or expanding businesses in Essex. See Phase 1 Strategy 3d for recommended programs. b) Create a Recruitment Information Package with print and digital marketing collateral. 6. Develop a <u>brand and placemaking effort</u> to showcase The Boulevard’s food scene. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Plan an annual food-related event to help brand The Boulevard as a unique dining destination for global cuisine and familiarize eventgoers with the existing restaurant businesses. b) Designate places for outdoor dining and food trucks clustered near other food establishments to shift The Boulevard to a dining destination. c) Pilot food and retail pop-ups at the food hub site confirmed in Phase I to build awareness of the site and gauge interest in demand for a commercial kitchen. 7. Solicit <u>development proposals from private sector developers</u> for a mixed-use project at the Park & Ride site. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Support the County with information about The Boulevard as it undertakes a RFEI/RFP process for the Park & Ride site. b) Negotiate and agree on a public-private partnership arrangement with the desired developer for the site.

Strategy Snapshot by Phase

Timeline	Strategy
<p>Phase III:</p> <p>Implement business recruitment campaign, food hub, and mixed-use development project (Year 3+)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">8. Partner with Baltimore County to launch a <u>targeted business recruitment campaign</u>.<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Create targeted social media advertising campaigns to reach businesses and decisionmakers in target industries.b) Launch a mail campaign to target existing, independently-owned restaurants looking to expand to The Boulevard.c) Attend food and restaurant-related conferences and trade shows to build restaurant recruitment and expansion capacity and connect with new businesses. 9. Leverage <u>media</u> to spotlight the Essex business community.<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Identify key local media outlets to increase community awareness about Essex and The Boulevard.b) Identify digital marketing channels to enhance online presence of Essex businesses.c) Create or enhance an Essex CDC website with content to parallel media activities and capture interested viewers. 10. Formalize a <u>food hub, culinary incubator, and shared commercial kitchen</u>.<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Invest in physical and technological infrastructure at the culinary incubator and shared commercial kitchen.b) Identify additional partnerships to attract businesses looking to expand food and retail operations.

Implementation Discussion

- Q&A
- Exercise

Making it Happen

1. Choose one of three groups based on the plan's priorities:
 - Food Destination
 - Supporting Essex Businesses (e.g., Essex-Based Business Navigator)
 - Mixed-Use Development
2. What resource(s) might Essex CDC require to make this priority happen?
3. How will your organization/department/company support this priority?