



# Ridgely's Delight

## Ridgely's Delight Strategic Plan

*By the residents, businesses,  
and friends of Ridgely's Delight*



*Summer 2004*

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## Forward

Ridgely's Delight and its surroundings are experiencing rapid change. In order to cope with this change, Ridgely's Delight conducted a strategic planning process in 2004. This document is the result of that process.

The seven-month process included wide-scale neighborhood participation and much hard work, including an issues survey, a physical survey of the community and an all day planning retreat. Thanks to everyone for your contribution.

We also have had wonderful support from outside the neighborhood. The Baltimore City Department of Planning provided information, education, and guidance before, during, and after the retreat. In addition, the Baltimore Community Foundation gave us the resources to print and unveil the plan at *Movies in the Park* night with a showing of *Pirates of the Caribbean* in the Conway Park.

Finally, we thank Michael Seipp for his careful guidance throughout our planning process. We could not have done it without him.

In sum, we hope that this plan will help Ridgely's Delight manage change and even use it to our advantage. Thanks again to all.



Blaine Nelson, President  
Ridgely's Delight Association

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## Introduction



The continued growth of Ridgely's Delight will be determined by its ability to manage change. In order to effectively manage change, Ridgely's Delight must determine the shape it wants to adopt over time.

Our strategic planning process has provided us with a set of goals and objectives both short and long term, as well as a tool to strengthen Ridgely's Delight's relationship with the outside world.

Creating the strategic plan involved two principle activities, learning and visioning. The Ridgely's Delight Strategic Planning Committee conducted a five-month information-gathering phase during which we learned as much as possible about the community. The committee distilled and collected this information in *Understanding Ridgely's Delight: Five Paths to Planning Information*, a document summarizing the elements of the learning phase:

- Issues Survey
- Information Gathering Event
- Business Survey
- Physical Survey
- Area Statistics

Familiarization with the information (available at [www.ridgleysdelight.org](http://www.ridgleysdelight.org)) helped prepare retreat participants for a productive, successful one-day planning retreat.

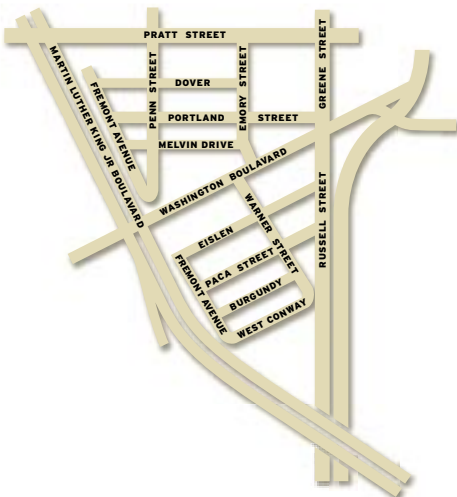
The objective of the retreat was to plot Ridgely's Delight's course in both the short and long term. The products of the retreat were:

- a vision statement for Ridgely's Delight
- a mission statement for the Ridgely's Delight Association, outlining how the association will direct the neighborhood toward achieving the vision
- a list of critical issues that require work now and the strategies for tackling them

This document includes the long-term vision and mission as well as the short-term critical issues and strategies.

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## Neighborhood Overview



Ridgely's Delight is a diverse downtown neighborhood located in the niche between the University of Maryland, Camden Yards, and Washington Village/Pigtown. One of Baltimore's historic districts, Ridgely's Delight's 19th century row houses form attractive, human scale streetscapes. Ridgely's Delight also offers a full calendar of social events that make our neighborhood a fun place to live.

Currently, the neighborhood and its surroundings are experiencing rapid change. Inside Ridgely's Delight, three large underutilized buildings are being rehabbed. Outside the neighborhood, plans are underway for a new convention hotel and the University of Maryland Biotechnology Park has broken ground. The West Side Renaissance and its centerpiece, the Hippodrome, is just a short walk away.

## **Vision for the Neighborhood, Mission of the Association: *Plotting a Long-term Course***

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### **The Ridgely's Delight Vision**

Historic Ridgely's Delight is an attractive urban village with a sense of home. It is a vibrant community that serves as a dynamic model for other neighborhoods.

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### **Mission Statement of the Ridgely's Delight Association**

The Ridgely's Delight Association:

1. Unites the neighborhood through outreach, social events, and communication
2. Promotes participation to realize the neighborhood vision
3. Serves as liaison with government and outside businesses and influences



## Critical Issues and Strategies: *Plotting a Short-term Course*

Part of the planning retreat was dedicated to the short term. We identified critical issues by listing the strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood as well as the current opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). Then we prioritized the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats by categorizing them as critical, important, or relevant. We then developed strategies to address each issue:

1. Neighborhood Business
2. Organization and Leadership
3. Crime
4. Historic Preservation
5. Increasing Homeownership
6. Maintaining or Increasing Diversity
7. Trash

### Critical Issue #1: Neighborhood Businesses

The vision for Ridgely's Delight is of an urban village: a self-sufficient, social neighborhood with a sense of home. Residents of such a neighborhood meet each other and walk and talk with each other on their way to the coffee shop, the deli, or wherever they're going.

The vision of an urban village makes the establishment of a viable business community the most critical issue for Ridgely's Delight. To realize the vision, Ridgely's Delight and the surrounding neighborhoods must have a network of mutually supportive neighborhood-centric businesses. The majority of the customer base for such businesses is comprised of people who live and work in Ridgely's Delight and the surrounding neighborhoods:

- apartment communities, including the Sail Cloth Factory, and the Zenith Towers (corner of Pratt and Paca)
- the University of Maryland community
- Barre Circle
- Washington Village/Pigtown

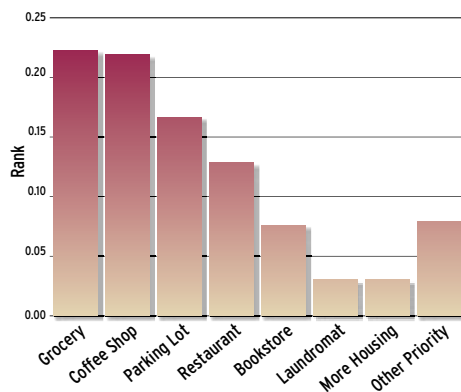
With all of these communities providing the customer base, neighborhood-centric businesses in and around Ridgely's Delight will succeed.

Neighborhood-centric businesses will make other important contributions toward the realization of Ridgely's Delight's vision. These businesses and the foot traffic they generate will make Ridgely's Delight more vibrant. By frequenting these businesses, residents will recognize their neighbors and know the owners. This will contribute to the sense of home described in the vision statement by extending the home into the neighborhoods.

The Association will implement the following strategies to address the issue:

- Identify potential commercial sites.
- Create a subcommittee to explore zoning and to ascertain the new planning department's zoning philosophy.
- Promote open communication with business owners.
- Remain cautious and vigilant of residential priorities (see figure 1).
- Work with existing businesses, e.g., facilitate grants for upgrades.
- Collaborate with Washington Village/Pigtown to encourage more neighborhood businesses.

Figure 1  
Issues survey result:  
neighborhood business priorities



Businesses suggested by respondents in the "other" category include a deli, a video store, a hardware store, and bagel shop.

Source: *Understanding Ridgely's Delight: Five Paths to Planning Information*

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## **Critical Issue #2: Organization and Leadership**

The Ridgely's Delight Association (RDA) has been in continuous operation for more than 25 years. During much of that period, a small group of committed residents held the organization together, as well as served and promoted the community.

As the neighborhood changes, so should the RDA. To begin this process, the Board of Directors will establish a committee to undertake a comprehensive review of the RDA Bylaws. The objectives of this exercise are to:

- increase participation in RDA
- develop more efficient operating procedures
- facilitate communication within the community, and with Baltimore City government, other communities and other surrounding organizations and institutions

We will implement the following strategies to improve the RDA:

- Increase the RDA Board of Directors from 10 to 11.
- Establish standing committees, chaired by Board members, to address on-going concerns that have been identified during the planning process, e.g., safety, social events, trash/beautification, and historic preservation.
- Provide guidance to the Board with a statement of the responsibilities of each office, which will include the commitment to chair or co-chair a committee.
- Publish an annual report on the website describing progress during the year and continuing concerns.
- Establish ad hoc committees to address issues that may arise in the future.

Adding Board members and recruiting other volunteers to facilitate their effectiveness should strengthen existing committees. In particular, the social committee should try to increase the number and variety of social events. Social events are the primary vehicle for bringing the community together and for enlisting volunteers for the organization.

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## **Critical Issue #3: Crime**

The RDA safety committee will continue to address crime issues in Ridgely's Delight through the following strategies:

- Maintain a close relationship with the Baltimore City Police Department and the University of Maryland Police.
- Expand the Citizens on Patrol.
- Continue and expand efforts to reach new residents through social and educational events and through the monthly newsletter. Hundreds of new residents move to Ridgely's Delight each year, many of whom become victims of crime because they are not used to living in urban neighborhoods.
- Adopt a long-term project to address the problems with infrastructure that impact safety. Some blocks need improved street lighting, which require lobbying for scarce City resources. In particularly dark areas, motion detector lights attached to private property could help deter crime. The committee will seek grants to fund the project.

## Critical Issue #4: Historic Preservation



In 1979, the residents of Ridgely's Delight revived their aging neighborhood by capitalizing on its historic identity and attributes. Twenty-five years later, history is one of the elements essential to realizing Ridgely's Delight's vision for these reasons:

- For the sake of practicality, maintaining alliances with preservation agencies and individual preservationists will enable Ridgely's Delight to control its destiny in the face of urban development. Most other neighborhoods don't have this control.
- History is valuable in its own right. That's why preservationists form alliances with neighborhoods like our own.
- By maintaining its history, Ridgely's Delight looks better than many neighborhoods that don't.

There are many ways a neighborhood can look attractive, and maintaining its historic appearance is one of the most effective. Most important, it's the path that Ridgely's Delight residents have chosen. The historic guidelines preserve a coherent look and feel for all of Ridgely's Delight: a pre-automotive age neighborhood with human-scale streetscapes.

Implementation is the job of the architectural review committee, a team of three Ridgely's Delight residents supported by the neighborhood association and the city's Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation (CHAP). The architectural review committee firmly and fairly enforces the historic guidelines while balancing the values of historicity and authenticity with the desire for vibrancy, practicality, and attractiveness.

The following strategies will help to preserve the historic face of Ridgely's Delight:

- Photo-document existing conditions to create a record of the state of the properties in Ridgely's Delight.
- Publish information on the implementation of preservation projects on the community website. This includes including such guidance as lists of historic window manufacturers, options, and rules.
- Promote historic preservation, which includes publication of short historic pieces on the website and historical highlights and website references in the neighborhood newsletter.
- Create a brochure on the history of Ridgely's Delight for distribution at the Babe Ruth Museum and other locations.
- Create a virtual tour of the neighborhood and its variety of historic rowhouses and streetscapes. This includes a printable document so that people can walk the route.

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### **Critical Issue #5: Increasing Homeownership**

Increasing the percentage of home ownership, which is approximately one-third at present, is an important long-term goal. An attractive neighborhood attracts homeowners. We will implement the following strategies to address the issue:

- Identify landlords in order to promptly notify them of problems with their properties. Report code violations promptly to the Baltimore Housing Department. Put pressure on non-compliant landlords to sell properties to homebuyers who wish to live in the properties.
- Promote the concept that trash makes a neighborhood less attractive to potential homeowners.
- Promote the community through house tours, festivals and beautification projects on the perimeter of the neighborhood.

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### **Critical Issue #6: Maintaining or Increasing Diversity**

Diversity, in the broadest sense of the word, is one of the most appealing features of Ridgely's Delight. Maintaining diversity, sometimes in opposition to prevailing market forces, is important to the residents.

- RDA will establish a committee to maintain diversity and help long-time residents remain in the neighborhood.

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### **Critical Issue #7: Trash**

The RDA trash committee will launch a coordinated effort to improve cleanliness and the overall appearance of the neighborhood through these strategies:

- Organize more frequent and visible activities such as the biannual clean-ups.
- Recruit block captains.
- Distribute written warnings with follow-up.
- Monitor public parks and other areas.
- Improve communication with the Sanitation Enforcement Division.