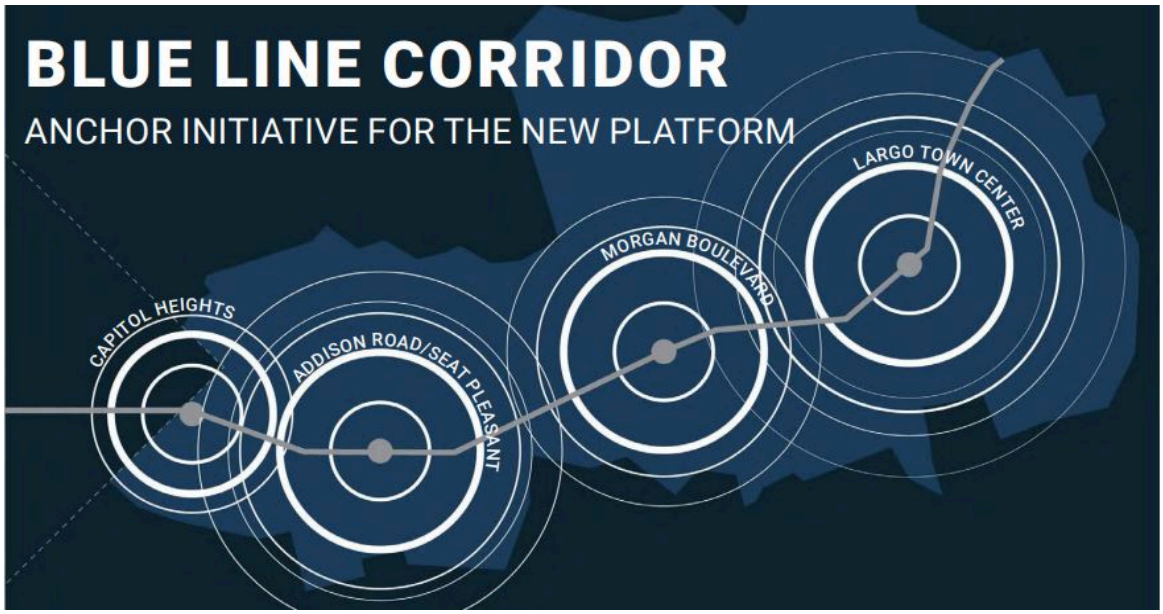
SPRING 2025

Local Initiatives Support Corporation Housing in the Blue Line Corridor



COURSE

BUSM 758Z: Integrative Capstone

PALS

An initiative of the National Center for Smart Growth
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PALS Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability

LISC DC

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ABOUT PALS

The Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability (PALS) is administered by the National Center for Smart Growth at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD). It is a campus-wide initiative that harnesses the expertise of UMD faculty and the energy and ingenuity of UMD students to help Maryland communities become more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. PALS is designed to provide innovative, low-cost assistance to local governments while creating real-world problem-solving experiences for University of Maryland graduate and undergraduate students.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project supports LISC DC's mission of inclusive economic development by focusing on the Blue Line Corridor in Prince George's County, an area with untapped potential and strong community roots. Through this initiative, we aim to develop a strategic roadmap for small business growth in two target industries: construction/sustainability and technology/artificial intelligence. Our work includes identifying existing businesses, evaluating their economic impact, and proposing actionable strategies to foster a resilient, community-centered small business ecosystem. This effort aligns with LISC's Community-Centered Economic Inclusion Framework and contributes to long-term, equitable development in the region.

Advancing Housing Sustainability Through Redevelopment

A Modular Strategy For Prince George's County

As Prince George's County implements the economic prosperity goals of its *Plan 2035*, addressing the demand for affordable, resilient, and sustainable housing is critical. Modular housing—known for fast delivery, cost control, and environmental benefits—offers a compelling solution. But successful modular housing hinges not just on technology, but on a localized strategy that leverages comparative advantages.

This report proposes a DDD Framework—Development, Deployment, and Deepening—a phased strategy for building a sustainable housing model rooted in community, logistics, and long-term economic control.

1. Development: Strategic Preparation and Workforce Readiness

The first phase is focused on strategic planning and capacity building. Rather than locating modular manufacturing in the county—where land use restrictions, permitting complexity, and high property costs prevail—Prince George's County can outsource production to modular firms in Nevada, Pennsylvania, or North Carolina (e.g., Boxabl, Vantem, Eco-Panels).

This allows the County to:

- avoid the environmental impact and regulatory burden of hosting factories
- reduce capital risk and land consumption
- focus local efforts on strategic coordination, deployment, and workforce development.

At the same time, we propose investing in preparing a local talent pipeline. This includes training electricians, plumbers, HVAC specialists, green builders, and permit/code professionals who understand local energy standards, compliance processes, and sustainability requirements.

These skills not only support modular housing but also future-proof the workforce, opening growth areas like EV infrastructure, solar panel installation, and smart home systems. This positions Prince George's County for success beyond housing.

2. Deployment: Local Execution with Strategic Advantage

Deployment is more than delivery. It's about placing modular homes in strategic zones—infill lots, transit corridors, and opportunity areas—that align with Tax Increment Financing-supported infrastructure and Prince George's County *Plan 2035* goals.

But what makes this deployment powerful is how it taps into logistical and cost advantages.

- The trained workforce lives locally and can commute 20–30 miles to job sites.
- It avoids the cost of housing out-of-state labor, per diems, or long-distance travel.
- It leverages local permitting expertise to avoid costly delays.

While national firms may promote one-day installs, that model delivers limited value. We intentionally extend the timeline to between seven and ten days per unit because we are preparing each site for the next critical phase: deepening. Our process prioritizes quality, compliance, and integration with long-term infrastructure—not short-term optics.

This is where Prince George's County begins to build a system that outsiders can't easily replicate. We combine zoning insight, community roots, and logistical efficiency into a deployment model that saves money over time and keeps wealth within the region.

3. Deepening: The Engine of Permanence and Comparative Advantage

Deepening is the most strategic phase—and the reason our installations take longer. It's not a delay; it's an intentional investment in permanence. Through deepening, we transform modular units into fully integrated, high-performance homes.

This process includes:

- permanent utility hookups (water, sewer, electrical)
- HVAC installation and high-efficiency systems
- structural anchoring for safety and compliance
- custom features for accessibility and longevity

- green infrastructure: solar readiness, stormwater reuse, and tree canopy
- certification preparation: LEED, Energy Star, NGBS.

This investment takes time—seven to ten days per home—but it results in housing that is more durable, efficient, and valuable.

In comparison, a national firm:

- would need to send crews across state lines for 70 to 100 days to deepen just ten homes
- they'd pay more for travel, lodging, and overtime
- they'd lose time, money, and efficiency.

Meanwhile, our local workforce drives from home and finishes jobs on schedule—with lower costs and stronger community engagement.

This is the comparative advantage: We are embedded in the community. We understand the environment. We save costs where others can't. And we deliver a better product.

But more importantly, this advantage gives us leverage. We can:

- franchise this model to neighboring counties
- expand into supply chain ownership (e.g., panel production)
- establish a public-private development authority to guide growth
- lead in green building policy and workforce innovation.

Deepening isn't just about homes. It's about building a resilient economic system that puts Prince George's County always one step ahead.

Conclusion: Housing with Intention, Growth with Control

The DDD framework—development, deployment, deepening—positions Prince George's County as more than a housing provider. It positions the county as a leader in sustainable development, economic resilience, and workforce empowerment.

By outsourcing production, deploying with a local strategy, and deepening with permanence, we deliver homes that are:

- affordable
- energy-efficient
- long-lasting

- community-anchored
- built to outlast the competition.

We are not just building houses. We are building a blueprint for equitable growth, local control, and long-term prosperity.

Why We Prioritized Construction and Sustainability Over Technology/AI

Recommendation: Focus on Construction and Sustainability in the Blue Line Corridor

Based on analysis of the competitive and comparative advantages across the region, we recommend prioritizing construction and sustainability-focused businesses for economic development along Prince George's County's Blue Line Corridor. While the technology and AI sectors thrive in Northern Virginia and Washington, DC—benefiting from proximity to federal contracts, world-class data centers, a business-friendly climate, and major airports like Dulles International that facilitate global connectivity—these advantages are less pronounced in Maryland's Blue Line area.

The corridor lacks a critical mass of IT firms, limiting ecosystem growth. Additionally, Maryland's recent imposition of a 3% sales tax on IT and data services increases operational costs for technology companies, making the state less attractive compared to Virginia, which offers more favorable tax and regulatory policies.

Instead, the Blue Line Corridor has strong potential for construction and sustainability industries due to its underutilized land and strong community roots. These sectors align closely with local development needs and national economic inclusion priorities. Construction and sustainability businesses are not impacted by Maryland's new IT tax and can benefit from federal and state incentives promoting green infrastructure and resilient community development. By focusing on these industries, LISC can leverage the unique assets of the Blue Line Corridor to foster inclusive economic growth and community resilience, while

complementing the broader regional tech ecosystem centered in Virginia and DC.

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