



FY26 Budget Testimony to the Maryland General Assembly

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House of Delegates

**Appropriations Committee
Education and Economic Development Subcommittee**

West North Avenue Development Authority – FY26 Budget

House Office Building, Room 120

Wednesday, February 5, 2025

Senate

**Budget and Taxation Committee
Health and Human Services Subcommittee**

West North Avenue Development Authority

FY26 Budget Hearing

Miller Senate Building, William Amoss Room, 4th Floor

Thursday, February 6, 2025

West North Avenue Development Authority (WNADA)

Good Afternoon, Chair, Vice-Chair, and other members of the Committee.

The Maryland General Assembly established the [West North Avenue Development Authority for Baltimore City \(WNADA\)](#), on October 1, 2021, to create a comprehensive plan for housing, economic, transportation, and neighborhood development along West North Avenue between 600 - 3200 Block, defined as the Target Area, and 250 yards surrounding the Target Area, defined as the Buffer Zone.

The primary mission of the Authority is to:

- Create a forum for stakeholders to come together on "one plan" for West North Avenue.
- Serve as a "clearinghouse and resource center" for promoting coordination and communication on development opportunities for West North Avenue.
- Ensure that money is being spent effectively and efficiently (for development) and that development is happening in the appropriate way for West North Avenue.
- Provide advisory services (to State and City agencies) on planning and development for West North Avenue.
- "Initiate" and "Fund" development projects for West North Avenue.

WNADA's Vision

Our agency's vision is to revitalize the historical communities along the W North Avenue corridor where residents and businesses can thrive in an environmentally friendly area with economic equity, various housing options, reliable public transportation access, and neighborhood improvements, without displacement; that supports diverse entertainment, commercial, and recreation along with light industrial manufacturing and retail as a "Made in Baltimore" destination site.

WNADA's Comprehensive Plan alignment to Governor and General Assembly Goals

On January 25, 2024, the Authority submitted a [Comprehensive Plan](#) to the Governor and General Assembly for West North Avenue through a series of stakeholder forums bringing together 16 different neighborhoods to agree on one plan. In the Comprehensive Plan, pages 117 – 128, the Authority list Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Tasks, Timeline, and the State and City agencies responsible for achieving measurements, outcomes and benchmarks in coordination with the Authority. These WNADA goals, objectives and strategies are aligned to the Governor's priorities of safer, affordable and competitive as illustrated in our [Governor and WNADA - Goals/Objectives/Strategies](#) matrix sheet completed by the team on February 25, 2024. This matrix sheet also illustrates the measurable quantitative and qualitative impact of our work.

WNADA's FY26 Budget Request

The Authority concluded its initial Fiscal Year (FY) of *operating within the appropriated funding structure of the State government* between July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024, for FY24, and started its second Fiscal Year on July 1, 2025, for FY25.

The Governor's proposed FY26 request for our agency represents an appropriate funding level to meet our legislative mandate within our current powers and authorities.

In our FY24 grant cycle we received 61 eligible applications requesting a total of \$25 million but were only able to fund \$9.74 million of our \$10.15 million for set-aside for grants, because we re-allocated those funds to general administration to support operational cost such as our Submittable® grant application software, DocuSign® and Adobe® electronic signature and filing documentation software, consultants and professional services.

This FY25 grant cycle we received 103 eligible applicants requesting a total of \$108 million for a 2.6 square mile area. The high number of applicants demonstrates a strong interest by real estate developers and businesses willing to venture in the reinvestment and revitalization of W North Avenue and its 16 neighborhoods through a public-private partnership, an appreciation of our creative and user-friendly [grant application](#) that is efficiency in making awards.

To annually justify the economic valuation of our grants, WNADA has contracted with [the John Hopkins University – 21st Century Cities Initiative Seydina Fall](#) to provide economic metrics value analysis of our grants and loans to determine full impact on increasing property, sales and income tax revenue for the State and Baltimore City.

Therefore, the administration believes the increase of \$5 Million in grant funding from FY25 to FY26 is critical towards improving the State of Maryland's economic metrics of employment, job openings, total jobs, population, homes sold, start-up businesses and venture capital investments that are statistical tracked by the [Maryland Economic Development Commission](#).

The West North Avenue Development Authority for Baltimore City is an essential agency for achieving the economic, housing and transportation goals of the Governor and General Assembly. The agency achieves this by ensuring the second most traveled public bus and rail transit corridor in the State, that has 56% (15,400 units) of the residential and commercial vacancies in Baltimore City, becomes safer, affordable and economically competitive by providing affordable trans-oriented development (TOD) workforce housing options; improving public safety that reduces crime; and creating multi-modes of transit for residents to achieve their career goals in various manufacturing, retail, technology and professional opportunities.

These activities will increase property, sales, and income tax revenue for the State and Baltimore City that can be invested in other programs to ensure no one is left behind economically or educationally, over the next 15 - 20 years of operating.

In addition, this agency has achieved a 48.3% MBE grants and contract award participate rate in FY24.

The committee may review both our [WNADA Pitch Deck](#) and [WNADA Performance Matrix](#) for a summary of our mission, vision, neighborhood analysis, goals, objectives, strategies and expected quantitative and qualitative performance measurement outcome benchmarks to be achieved. We have also included a list our [WNADA FY24 Grantees](#) that were funded to accomplish either housing, economic, transportation or neighborhood development activities to revitalize W Baltimore.

Response to DLS Budget Analysis

- 1) WNADA should provide an update on what efforts have been taken to follow up on the funding pledged by Baltimore City for fiscal 2024 and 2025.**

On Wednesday, January 29, WNADA received a \$260,000 check from Baltimore City to cover FY24 operation costs. The City of Baltimore and WNADA are scheduling a meeting to discuss collaborative funding support for FY25.

- 2) WNADA should comment on efforts it is taking or plans to take to secure non-State funding in the future.**

The current legislative authority for WNADA restricts the agency as follows: "*12-704 THE AUTHORITY MAY MANAGE APPROPRIATED FUNDS FROM THE CITY OF BALTIMORE AND THE STATE.*"

If DLS and the General Assembly would like WNADA to develop plans to secure non-state funding, then support of SB4/HB258 is essential. If SB4/HB258 is approved, WNADA will have already identified and established relations with philanthropic institutions such as JP Morgan, Wells Fargo, CareFirst, and Bloomberg to secure foundation funds for additional or supplemental operational expenses and capital project costs of the agency.

- 3) The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommends that \$82,614 in general funds budgeted for the new position be made contingent on the enactment of SB4 or HB258.**

WNADA accepts this recommendation.

- 4) Should WNADA not be made permanent via legislation this year, the authority should develop a transition plan for how other agencies could take responsibility for carrying out the strategies and objectives in the revitalization plan.**

WNADA accepts this recommendation.

- 5) DLS recommends that the restricted funding (of \$250,000) be released assuming no objections are raised by the committees at the budget hearing.**

WNADA accepts this recommendation.

6) DLS recommends reducing general funds for grants to nongovernmental entities by \$5.0 to a total of \$15.0 million.

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A reduction of \$5.0 million will undermine the progress of general property, income, and sales tax revenue for the State and Baltimore City in an area where the State and City are currently not receiving property taxes from 15,000 housing units and a potential 46,000 individuals with an average income range of \$50,000 - \$90,000 who are unable to live in these vacant and blighted housing units.

7) DLS does not recommend any additional funding until WNADA can demonstrate how the current funding level meets the comprehensive plan's goals using the anticipated metrics.

WNADA disagrees with this recommendation.

WNADA has submitted a Managing-for-Results (MFR) performance metric sheet that articulates our benchmark goals and results towards achieving the comprehensive plan's goals. The benchmark metrics are currently categorized under housing, economic, transportation, and green space.

If this is insufficient for DLS to determine whether the agency is meeting the comprehensive plan's goals, please provide what other metrics and formats DLS expects to receive to evaluate the agency's performance

However, WNADA's goals, objectives and strategies are aligned to the Governor and General Assembly priorities of a safer, affordable and competitive Maryland as illustrated in our [Governor and WNADA - Goals/Objectives/Strategies](#) matrix sheet completed by the team on February 25, 2024. This matrix sheet also illustrates the measurable quantitative and qualitative impact of our work.

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