

## Micro Solutions Consulting

<u>Team Member Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Major</u>
Astrid Chase	2025	Sustainability Mgmt.
Frederich Lightner	2023	Business Mgmt. & Sustainability Mgmt.
Jason Buller	2025	Sustainability Mgmt. & Marketing

**Advisor(s):** Dr. Astrid Schmidt-King, Barry Benjamin, Donald Manekin

**Topic Title:** Vacant Lots to Green Spots: Pocket Parks in Communities

**Audience:** Planning Commission for Baltimore City

### Sustainable Development Goal

SDG #11 Sustainable Cities & Communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

### Executive Summary

Accessible and equitable public green spaces are necessary in urban environments to support physical and mental health, the environment, and community development. Sadly, systemic issues such as segregation and underinvestment have resulted in underserved and marginalized communities lacking equitable access to quality public green spaces. An analysis of public parks in Baltimore by the Public Land Trust found that predominantly black and low-income neighborhoods in metropolitan areas had access to less acres of public land than predominately white and higher-income neighborhoods. Increasing public investment in high-quality, sustainable, publicly maintained pocket parks would balance this key difference in park characteristics across socioeconomic lines and allow for the manifestation of several benefits.

In Baltimore City, resiliency against systemic challenges has been demonstrated through local organizations' efforts and partnerships with governments and businesses. Several local organizations have placed efforts on renovating several of Baltimore's 30,000 vacant buildings and lots into publicly maintained green spaces which provide for safer and healthier communities, economic development, and a greener environment. Baltimore City has supported the advancement of these green spaces or pocket parks through several efforts including the establishment of the Baltimore Green Network (BGN). The BGN brings communities and non-profits together to help neighborhoods transform and maintain vacant lots into green communal assets. Pocket parks have also been supported through private-public partnerships in which locally based organizations such as Under Armour sponsor the maintenance of such spaces. Though community organizations have been effective in organically sprouting several pocket parks accountable for alleviating mental stress, increasing cognitive and immune function, promoting interpersonal connection, and reducing pollution, a heightened, systemic effort and level of investment must be made by the private and public sectors to scale current efforts, and to maintain and enhance the benefits of micro parks that curb health issues, violence, pollution, and division among communities. The Baltimore City Planning Commission must recognize how investing in the implementation and maintenance of public green spaces will revitalize neighborhoods to become more safe, equitable, inclusive, and resilient.